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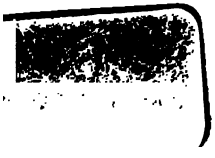

MY LITTLE GIRL.

LONDON:
SWEETING AND CO., PRINTERS,
80, GRAY'S INN ROAD.

MY LITTLE GIRL.

CHAPTER I.

HIL, you see, was born for better things. His heart was open to all noble impulses, as his eye and his ear were attuned to all harmonies of colour and sound. He had a quick appreciation—could take a broad view of

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CHAPTER I.

PHIL, you see, was born for better things. His heart was open to all noble impulses, as his eye and his ear were attuned to all harmonies of colour and sound. He had a quick appreciation—could take a broad view of

things. He knew his own powers; for men no more really deceive themselves on the score of intellect than women on that of beauty. If a man has brains, he knows it. I reserve the rights of those that are not clever and know it, and pretend to be and are proud of their pretensions. These are the men who go about the world with all the letters of the alphabet after their names, imposing more upon themselves than on the credulous public. There is yet another difference to be made. Some few men are proud of the ἐνέργεια, and many men are proud of the δύναμις. The pride of potentiality lingers long after the power of real work has altogether gone, long after the regret that tinges the first twenty years of an idle man's life. You may see, at Oxford and Cambridge, old men who walk erect and proud, still flushed with the triumphs they achieved as boys, and proud still as men; though their strength has been measured against no other competitors, and in no larger battle-field, and though the men they once defeated have long since conquered in far greater struggles, while they have grown rusty over the combination port.

Philip was now at the age when regret is strongest. At no time do the possibilities of life appear so splendid as at twenty-five, or is the

conscience quicker to reproach us for wasted opportunities. But, after all, what was he to do? Life is but a vague thing to a young subaltern of distinct ambitions, not clearly seeing what glorious path to take up. Often enough it becomes a merely ignoble thing, meaning billiards, betting, brandy and soda, et talia. In Phil's case, the life he led was telling on his face—broadening his features, giving them a coarse expression. Our lives are stamped upon our faces. Does there not come a time in every good man's life when the hardest and unloveliest of faces softens into beauty by reason of the victory within? Do not buy a "nose machine," unlovely reader. Have patience, and aim at the highest things; and one day your face, too, shall be beautiful. As for Adonis, if he had lived the life of men about town, his face would have been coarse as theirs before the age of thirty.

The coloured blood had something to do with it. It helped to make Philip at once sensitive, eager of distinction, and vain. But not everything. Fain would I put it all down to colour. Mighty comforting thing as it is to us white men to reflect on our superiority, we must be careful about the theory. We may be the aristocracy of Nature. To be sure, the creature who walks about in the similitude of man, with the

lives of these men are subtle, perhaps; but, once pointed out, ought to be clear even to Jones."

It was on another occasion that Venn showed how an apology might be made for a criminal on higher ground than that reached by the evidence. He delivered his "Oratio pro Peccatore" one night in wig and gown. The following is a portion:—

"Circumstances, my lud, have been against my unhappy client. Brought up under the contempt, or fancied contempt, of society, he early manifested his superiority to the ordinary trammels imposed on the thick-headed by becoming a prig. I do not mean assistant masters of Rugby or Marlborough, who are all prigs, but the common prig of the London streets. From a prig of Holborn, the transition was easy to being a prig on a larger scale and in a more extended sphere. Step by step, my lud and gentlemen of the jury, you may trace everything back, not to the want of education, because my client was taught in a National School, and possesses even now a knowledge of the Kings of Israel; but to the fact that, in the circles wherein he should have moved, his parentage was despised—his father, gentlemen of the jury, having been a barrister at law, and his mother at one time a lady of the ballet."

And with this as a preface, he would go on to defend his client.

You may leave out the preceding, if you like. But I would rather you read it.

Meantime, it is the month of May—

> " Ce fut en très doux tenz de Mai
> Que di cuer gai,
> Vont cis oiseillon chantant,"

as the old French song has it. Laura has met Philip in all about six or seven times—always with another promise of secrecy. She is to marry Philip. That is agreed upon between them. It will please Mr. Venn. Meantime, she is trying to understand her lover. He is kind to her; but not with the tenderness of her guardian, to whom she compares him. He is not gentle with her; but passionate, fitful, uncertain of temper—being, indeed, in constant conflict with himself. Then he was suspicious and jealous. Worse than all, he was always asking her if she loved him more, if she loved him at all, if she ever could love him. It wearied and teased her —this talk of love. "What did it mean?" she asked herself over and over again, but could find no answer.

"I don't know, Philip," she said. "What is the use of always asking?"

"You must know if you love me, Laura."

"How am I to know?"

"Do you love Mr. Venn?"

"Oh, yes!"—her face lit up at once; "but I don't feel at all like that—oh, not in the least bit. If that is love, why, I suppose I do not love you."

Philip ground his teeth.

"Always Mr. Venn," he growled. "Tell me, Laura, do you like to be with me?"

"Yes, it is pleasant—so long as you are in a good temper—to talk to you. I like you a great deal better than when I saw you first. I don't think you are such a good man as you ought to be, because I have heard you swear, which is vulgar."

"You shall make me good, when we are married."

"And when will that be?" she asked, suddenly. "Because, you see, I will not go on having secrets from Mr. Venn; and I must tell him soon."

"Then you will give me up," said Philip, gloomily.

"Very well," she returned, calmly; "that will be better than deceiving Mr. Venn. To be sure, I am only deceiving him with the idea of pleasing him. Of course he will be pleased." She

sighed. "If only I felt *quite* sure! But he told me so distinctly that I was to marry a gentleman. Oh, he will be pleased. And I am sure he will like you."

"Only wait a little longer, my dear."

"No, Philip—I will not wait any longer. We must be married at once, or I will tell Mr. Venn all about it. I cannot bear to have secrets from him. I believe, after all, you are only laughing at me, because I am not a lady."

The tears of vexation came into her eyes.

Philip's face was very gloomy. It was in his moments of anger that the cloud fell upon his face which altered his expression, and changed him almost to a negro. It was then that his nostrils seemed to broaden, his lips to project, his cheeks to darken.

"Tell him, then," he returned; "and good-bye."

He turned on his heel—it was under the trees in Kensington Gardens. She sat down and looked at him. There was no anger in her breast for the spretæ injuria formæ: none at the loss of a love, none at the destruction of an idol. For she had no love. Philip Durnford had never touched her heart. To please Mr. Venn —let us say it again and again—to please Mr. Venn, who wanted to see her married to a

gentleman, and because she was wholly, utterly ignorant of the world and innocent of its ways, she listened to Philip's pleading, and almost offered herself to him in marriage. What did marriage mean? She knew nothing. How was she to know? She spoke to no one but Hartley Venn. She never read novels or love poetry. Her life was as secluded as that of any nun.

Her lover was three or four yards off, when his expression changed as suddenly to his old one. He wavered, and half turned.

"Philip," cried Laura, "come here."

He turned, and stood before her.

"I think I have made a great mistake. Perhaps Mr. Venn would not be pleased. Let us say good-bye, and go away from each other for ever. You will soon forget me; and before I listen to any one again, I will take Mr. Venn's advice."

She spoke in a businesslike tone, as if the whole thing was a mere matter of expediency; and shook her head with an air of the most owl-like wisdom, and looked more beautiful than ever. It was one of the characteristics of this young lady that she had as many different faces as there are thoughts in the brain, for she changed with each. I think her best was when she was playing in the evening—far away, in

imagination, in some Paradise of her own—alone with Mr. Venn.

Philip's blood leaped up in his veins. All the love and desire he had ever entertained for her seemed multiplied tenfold. He seized her hand and held it fast.

"My Laura!" he cried, "my little bird, my pet! Do you think I will let you go? At least, not till I have had another chance. It is all finished—all the waiting and hoping. I am ready to marry you whenever you like. You shall name your own day, and you shall tell Mr. Venn after we are married. Only keep the secret till then."

"How long am I to wait?" asked the girl.

"A week—ten days, not more. We must make our preparations. I must get you all sorts of things, darling. I love you too well to let you go in a fit of passion. If I have been ill-tempered at times, it is because I am sometimes troubled with many things of which you know nothing. Make a little allowance for me. You, at least, shall never be troubled, Laura, my pet. My happiness is in your hands. Give it back to me; and, in return, all my life shall be spent in trying to please you."

"You frighten me," she said. "You are so passionate. Why do you hold my hand so

hard? Look here, Philip—I will do this. To-day is Wednesday. I will meet you and marry you next Wednesday, if you like. If you do not marry me then, you shall not marry me at all. And now, good-bye till Wednesday morning."

She tripped away, without her heart beating a single pulsation faster; while he was left trembling in every limb.

"Wednesday!" He began to reflect how people were married. "Wednesday. A week. And there is everything to be got ready."

He went to the City, to his agent's, and drew five hundred pounds.

"It is my duty, Mr. Durnford," said the agent, "to remind you that you have only a thousand pounds left. Although it is invested at ten per cent., a hundred a year is not a large income."

"You are quite right," said Philip. "It is not, indeed—too small to be considered, almost. But I must have the five hundred."

He lodged it at Cox's; and then went to a milliner's shop and ordered a complete trousseau, to be ready packed in a few days. They wanted to try things on; but he picked out a young lady in the shop of about Laura's dimensions, and told them to try the things on her.

After that, he began to investigate the great marriage question, being as yet little conversant

with legal procedure of any kind. He knew that you might go to church, or that you might go to a registrar's office; so he found out the office of a registrar, and asked what he had to do.

It appeared to be very simple. You must reside for a space of three weeks in a parish—that had already been done; but, which made it impossible, he must have the names posted up in the office for a fortnight. And so he went and bought a special licence.

He went home radiant with hope and happiness, and spent a quiet evening alone, communing with the future.

The next day he went to see how the trousseau was getting on, and bought a wedding ring. Then he ordered several new suits of clothes to be made at once, and a large stock of linen, with an undefined feeling that married life meant everything new.

That was Thursday's work.

Then came Friday, and, with Friday, a visit from Mr. MacIntyre.

"You will not spend many more evenings with me," said Phil; "so sit down and make yourself comfortable."

"And wherefore not?" asked his tutor.

"Because I'm going to be married next Wednesday."

"Gude guide us!" The good man turned quite pale. "Next Wednesday? Is all settled? It is Laura, of course—I mean Miss Collingwood."

"Of course it is Laura."

"And how are you to be married?"

"By special licence."

Mr. MacIntyre looked as if he would ask another question, but refrained; and presently went his way.

On Tuesday evening, Mr. MacIntyre looked up quietly, and asked—

"What church are you going to be married in?"

Phil turned pale.

"Idiot that I am! I never thought about the church at all."

CHAPTER II.

"UNDER ordinary circumstances, Lollie," said Venn, on Tuesday morning, when the child came round—"under ordinary circumstances, the middle-aged man awakes in the morning with the weary feeling of a day's work before him." He always spoke as if he was oppressed with the duties of labour. "By some unlucky accident, I feel this morning as if the innocent mirth of childhood was back again. I fear nothing. I hope everything. Two courses are therefore open to us."

"What two courses?" asked the girl—always watchful of Venn's words, and never quite able to follow the conclusions to which they led him.

"I ought, I suppose, to take advantage of this unusual flow of spirits, and write something with the real glow of joy upon it. My works are,

perhaps, too uniformly meditative. I dare say you have remarked it."

"I think they are beautiful, all of them," replied the flatterer.

"Ah, Lollie, I ought to be a happy man. I have an audience—limited at present, to be sure—which appreciates me. Mohammed had his Cadijah. But there is another course open to us. See the sun upon the leaves of the two trees in the court. Listen to the sparrows chirping with renewed vigour. They know that the hilarious worm will be tempted forth to enjoy the sun. The purring of the basking cat is almost audible if you open the window. The paper boy whistles across the square. The policemen move on with a lighter step. The postman bounds as he walks. The laundresses put off their shawls. Lollie, what do these things mean?"

"They mean going into the country, do they not?" she replied, catching his meaning.

"They do, child. They mean Epping Forest. We will take the train to Loughton and walk to Epping. They mean a little dinner at the Cock, and a pint of Moselle. They mean strolling through the wood to Theydon Bois, and coming home in the evening with roses in our cheeks."

Another time, Lollie would have jumped for joy. Now she only looked up and smiled.

"What is the matter, my little girl?" asked Hartley, taking her face in his hands. "For a fortnight past you have not been in your usual spirits. To-day you are pale and worn. Are you ill, Lollie?"

"No," she cried, bursting into tears, "I am not ill; only—only—you are so good to me."

His own eyes filled as he stooped and kissed her forehead.

"You are nervous this morning, little one—you must go to Epping, that is clear."

"It is not only that: it is something else."

"What else, Lollie? You can tell me."

"It is my secret, Mr. Venn."

"Well, then, Lollie, if that is all, I can wait for this precious secret. So be happy again."

"It is a secret that concerns you. I think it will make you happier—you said once that it would. Oh, I wish I might tell you—I wish you would let me."

"Little Impatience! And what sort of a secret would that be which I know already? Do you remember the man who whispered his to the winds? Never tell a secret, child; because the birds of the air may carry it about."

"I have been so unhappy about it," the girl

went on, through her tears. "I can't sleep for thinking of it. Oh, you will be pleased—I know you will. But I wish I could tell you. I will—I don't care who is offended. Mr. Venn, I am going——"

"Stop, Lollie," he replied, putting his finger to her lips—"don't tell me. See, I give you perfect control over your secret till to-morrow. I refuse to listen—I am deaf. If you try to tell me I shall begin to sing, and then the nearest cows will fall ill, and the calves will lie down and expire."

She sighed, and was silent. Alas! if only she had spoken. Fate was against her.

They went to Loughton, and took that walk through the forest which only the East-end Cockneys love. In the long glades which stretch right and left the hawthorn was in full blossom; the tender green of the new leaves, freshly coloured, and all of different hues, the soft breath of the young summer, the silence and repose, fell on the girl's spirit and soothed her. For the moment she forgot the secret, and almost felt happy. And yet it lay at her heart. Her life—she knew so much—was going to be changed; how much she could not tell. The life of two would be, she thought, a life of three. It was what Mr. Venn had wished for her; and

yet—and yet—there was the shade of a danger upon her, a foreboding of calamity, which she tried in vain to throw off. Venn poured out his treasures of fancy—those half thought-out ideas and half-seen analogies which filled his brain, and evaded him when he tried to put them on paper. But they fell, for once, on unfruitful ground. She caught some of them, or only half caught them; and then talk grew languid.

"My spirits of this morning seem to have failed me," he cried, impatiently—

> 'Not seldom, clad in radiant hue,
> Deceitfully goes forth the morn.'

A spiritual shower has fallen, and we have no umbrella. What is it, child?" he asked, impatiently. "Why are we so silent and sad to-day? Let us be happy. Are we drenched with the shower?"

Lollie half laughed, and they walked on.

Presently they came upon a woman, toiling along with a baby in her arms, and two children toddling after them. As they came up to her, the woman turned and struck one of them sharply, for lagging.

"Don't do that, my good creature," said Venn. "Perhaps the little one is tired."

"He's tired and hungry too, sir," she replied;

"but I've got to get him to Epping, for all that, and walk he must."

"Poor little man!" said Venn. "Say, are you very tired?"

The child was evidently worn out.

"We are going the same way," he said. "I will carry him for you."

"You, sir?—and a gentleman and all!"

"Why not? Come, my boy."

He lifted the little one in his arms.

"Lollie, I am not going to let you carry the other. He is big enough to walk.

"Ah, yes, miss — dont'ee now," said the woman. "He's strong enough—aint you, Jackey?"

Then they all walked away together—Venn talking to the woman, and she telling her little story; how her husband had got work at Epping, and she was walking all the way from town with her babies.

"I had a comfortable place, sir," she said, "six years ago; and little I thought then of the hardships I should have to undergo. God knows we've been half starving sometimes."

"And are you sorry you married?" asked Lollie.

"Nay, miss, a woman is never sorry she married," replied the poor wife. "My man is a

real good sort, unless now and then when it's the drink tempts him. And then I've the children, you see. Ah! well, sir—God gives us the good and the bad together. But never you think, miss, that a woman is sorry she married."

"Truly," said Venn, "marriage is a continual sacrament."

"Are you married yourself, sir?"

"I am not," he replied, gravely. "So far I am only half a man; and now I shall never marry, I fear."

Lollie looked up in his face, over which lay that light cloud of melancholy which alternated in Venn with the sweet smile of his mobile lips. She walked on, pondering. "No woman ever sorry for being married." There was comfort!

"You are happy when you are with your husband?" she asked, presently.

The woman turned sharply upon her.

"Of course, I am happy with my Ben," she said. "Happiness with us is not made of the same sort of stuff as with you rich folks."

"I am not a rich folk," said the girl, smiling.

"Well, well—never mind my sharpness, miss. You're one of the kind folks, and that's all I care about."

She trudged on, talking to herself, as such women do, between her lips. Venn was behind

them now, talking to the boy in his arms; and so they reached Epping. At the outskirts of the long town, where the cottages begin, the woman insisted on the boy being put down, and began to thank them. Venn gave her a little present of a few shillings, and left her trudging along with the children.

"There goes our Moselle, Lollie," he said with a sigh. "Always some fresh disappointment. I had set my heart on that Moselle for you."

"Oh, Mr. Venn! As if I should be so selfish."

"All the same," he grumbled. "It was a stroke of my usual bad luck, meeting that woman."

The bottle of Moselle made its appearance in spite of her; but even the sparkle of the wine failed to raise Lollie's spirits to their usual level. The girl was profoundly dejected. Venn tried the wildest talk, told her the wildest stories; but in vain. It grew close to the hour of the last train—the Great Eastern, with its usual liberality, having fixed the last train at eight, so as to prevent everybody from enjoying the evening in the Forest. They walked together to the station—silent, dejected, and unhappy.

"I wish—oh, I wish to-morrow was over!"

the girl sighed, when they were alone in the railway carriage.

"Does that secret worry you, Lollie? Is that the wretched cause of your depression? Forget it—put it out of your mind."

"Let me tell it you."

"Nonsense, child," he laughed; "as if I wanted to know. Think of Midas, as I told you this morning. You shall not tell me now."

"Tell me once more," she said, "what you would like me most of all to do."

He hesitated. Had he followed the promptings of his own heart, he would have said—

"To marry me, Lollie; to go away with me from London; to live together, never to get tired, in some country place—the world forgetting, by the world forgot."

If he had but said so!—for it was not yet too late, and the girl was yearning to tell him all.

"I think, child," he said, slowly, after a pause, "there is but one thing I really want you to do. I should like, before all else, to see you married happily. Sukey settled that for us, you know. I haven't seen Sukey now for two months. Let us go there to-morrow."

"Not to-morrow," said Lollie. "Do you really mean—really and truly mean what you say? You would like to see me married?"

Heavens, how blind the man is! He does not see that the girl's whole heart is his; that after all those years her nature is responsive to his own; that she has but one thought, one affection, one passion—though she knows it not—the love of Hartley Venn.

"Mean it?" he says, with his tender smile. "Of course I mean it. Recollect what the woman said to-day. You have seen how love may survive poverty, hunger, misery; and rise triumphant over all. Think what love may be when there is no misery to beat it down."

"Love—yes, love. They are always talking about love. I mean marriage."

"They go together, Lollie."

"Does—" she checked the name that rose to her lips—"do people, when they talk of marriage, always mean love."

"They are supposed to do so, Lollie. On the other hand, when they talk of love, they do not always— Ah, here is Fenchurch-street."

No more was said that night. The girl went up to his room and made him tea; and at half-past nine she put on her hat.

"To-morrow, Mr. Venn—ah! to-morrow—I shall tell you my secret."

"Sleep soundly, little bird, and forget your secret. What time am I to know it?"

"I don't quite know. I should think, in the afternoon."

"Very well, then; I shall stay in from one till four, and if you do not come then I shall suppose the secret is not ready. Will that do? Good night, Lollie dear."

He stooped to kiss her forehead; but she took his face in her hands, and kissed his lips almost passionately.

"Always believe," she said, "even if you are not pleased, that I love you, and am so grateful to you that nothing can tell it. Always believe I love you, and hoped to please you."

And so slipped away, and was gone.

Did Hartley have no suspicion? None—none—none. He was not, you see, a man "about town." He did not think or suspect evil. Least of all could he suspect evil in the case of his little girl. And that she should take his words so literally as to marry a man in order to please him would have struck him as beyond all belief.

And yet it was exactly what she was going to do.

CHAPTER III.

IT is the morning of Lollie's wedding day. As the girl dresses in her little room, she is crying silently. For a great fear has fallen upon her, the fear that what she is going to do will not meet with that approval and praise which she at first

anticipated. It had been growing in her brain; and when, only yesterday, she first gave it expression, it assumed a clear and definite form. She dressed quickly, trying to soothe her own excitement, drank a cup of tea, and slipped out at ten o'clock to meet her lover. No thought you will remark, of her grandmother? On the whole, I hardly see how any could be expected. The girl did not belong to the old woman. She owed nothing to her, she had not a thought in common with her, she hardly ever spoke to her; and save that they slept under one roof, they had nothing to do with each other. Certainly, the idea that the old woman might be made unhappy by conduct of hers never occurred to her. It was a lovely morning in June, one of those days when London puts on its brightest aspect, and looks—as it always would, were Heaven pleased to improve our climate—the Empress of cities. Through the crowded streets, down Oxford-street and Regent-street, without stopping to look at the gratuitous exhibitions in the shop windows, Lollie tripped along, with heightened colour and quick-beating pulse.

Going to be married—going to marry a gentleman! What would be Mr. Venn's surprise and delight when she went to him in the evening!

For once, Philip was first at their trysting-place in the park.

Going to be married. Going to plight her troth—for better for worse, too. A girl, who, in the absolute innocence of her heart, gives herself to him for no love that she bears him, but only to please, as she thinks, another man. Going to be a bridegroom? He does not look it, as he paces up and down the gravel, driving down his heels, with a pale face and a troubled look. Surely a bridegroom should look in better spirits; and when he sees the girl approaching, his own betrothed, soon to be his bride, why do his knees tremble beneath him, so that he must fain sit down on a bench?

Then she holds out her hand, and he takes it undauntedly.

"Remember what I said, Philip," she began directly. "Unless you marry me to-day, I shall not marry you at all; and I shall tell Mr. Venn everything."

"Is that the only love-vow you have to give me?" asked the bridegroom.

"Oh, Philip, do not talk like that. Always of love, and love-vows! I tell you again, I do not understand it. What should I say, if not the truth?"

Philip sighed. There was yet time to save himself. The girl did not love him; but, then, he loved the girl. He had that passionate longing for this sweet, fair-haired maiden—so bright, so clever, so *new*—which, I think, can never come to a man more than once in his life. God has made us so that not more than one woman can be an angel to us. Her excepted—we know the sex. We grovel to her; we stand upright before the rest, conscious of the head and a half difference between the man and the woman. Lollie was Philip's angel. And—alas! the pity of it—there are so many men who cannot hold their one woman an angel for longer than the honeymoon; and must needs cry shame and folly to themselves for the sweet infatuation which alone makes life tolerable to us.

"Come, Laura," said Philip, "I have the licence in my pocket—a special licence. See here." He pulled out the document. "The Archbishop of Canterbury has given his consent, you see; so that is all right. I thought you would best like a private marriage."

"Oh, yes," cried Lollie—"much best."

"And as we shall have no wedding breakfast, no carriage, and nothing but our own two selves, I have arranged with a very excellent clergyman

—a Scotch clergyman—to perform the ceremony for us which will make you my wife. Will that do for you ?"

He had fallen, then, into the pit digged for him.

"Surely, Philip," she said, "it shall all be as you think best for us ; and then I shall tell Mr. Venn."

He had been out of the park into the Strand, and took a Hansom cab to Keppel-street.

Mr. MacIntyre was himself standing at the window in the ground-floor front, and came to open the door. Then he led them in, and shut the door carefully. That done, he stared hard at the bride.

"Come into the other room a moment," said Philip, in a hoarse voice. "I want to say a word."

The other room was Mr. MacIntyre's bedroom, opening from the first by folding-doors. Lollie, left alone, looked out of the window and waited. As she looked, a funeral procession came from an opposite house, and the dismal cortège passed down the street. Then, too, the sky was clouded over, and big drops of rain were falling. Her heart sank within her. Truly, an omen of the worst. She turned from the window and looked round the room. A curious fra-

grance, unknown to her, was lingering about the corners. It was due to toddy. A small fire was burning in the grate, though the morning was warm; and a kettle was singing on the hob. Two or three pipes lay on the mantelshelf; and a few books, chiefly of the Latin Grammar class, bought when Mr. MacIntyre meditated taking pupils, stood upon the shelves. The furniture was hard and uncomfortable. And her spirits fell lower and lower.

In the other room she heard voices. If she had heard what was said, she might even then have escaped. But she only heard the murmur.

Philip, when the door was shut, turned upon his companion, with lips and cheeks perfectly white, and seizing Mr. MacIntyre by the shoulders, shook the little man backwards and forwards as if he had been a reed.

"Villain!" he groaned—"black-hearted, calculating scoundrel."

"When you've done shaking your best friend," returned his tutor, "and calling bad names, perhaps you will listen for a few moments to the voice of reason."

"Go on, then."

Philip sat down on the edge of the bed.

"I can't do it, MacIntyre—I can't do it," he murmured. "It is the blackest villainy. Poor

Laura! poor darling! Oh, what scoundrels we are! And I, who once was an honourable man!"

"Hoots, toots," said the philosopher.

But Philip was lying with his face in his hands, shaking with emotion.

MacIntyre contemplated his old pupil for a few moments with a puzzled expression. Then —for he felt unequal to the ordeal without support—he went to the cupboard, and very silently poured out just half a glass of raw spirit, which he swallowed hastily. Then he addressed himself to business, and tried, but with small effect, to assume a sympathetic air.

"Ma puir laddie," he said. "You surely never thought that I, Alexander MacIntyre, the releegious guide of your infancy, was going to counsel you to take a dishonourable step. Phil, ye'll be as legally tied up as if the Archbishop did it. Believe me, a regularly ordained minister of the Established Kirk o' Scotland. If a prince was going to be married, this would be the right shop to come to. And you, with a licence, special and most expensive, and all."

Philip sat up again.

"Is it true, MacIntyre? Is it really true, what you say?"

"True, my Phil, every word true. Shall I swear to it? Now, brush your hair and look

bright, and let us go back to the lassie. Hech! man—there's a thunder-clap. Come along, or she will be frightened."

He pushed him back, and, sitting down at the table, laid open a Bible, borrowed for the occasion from the unsuspecting landlady.

"Sit down, both of you," he began, imperiously.

They sat down opposite him.

"Have ye got a licence, Mr. Durnford?" he asked. "Good. A special licence, granting you permission to be married in any parish? Good. At any time? Good. In any place of worship? Vera good. And by any clergyman? Vera good indeed. Young leddy, your name, if you please. You may write it here."

He had prepared two slips of paper to imitate a marriage certificate. And Philip noticed now, for the first time, that he was "dressed" for the character, in complete black, with a white neck-cloth that would not have disgraced a banjo man, and which, with his red nose, gave him quite the appearance of a superior Mute. And, the signatures obtained, when he turned over the leaves of the Bible a cheerful piety became diffused over his face, quite new to his friends, and very remarkable to witness. Lollie looked at the clergyman who was marrying her with an

instinctive feeling of aversion. The ill-fitting black clothes, the voluminous necktie, the red nose and pale cheeks, the shaking hand, all told her, as plain as words could speak, that the man was one of the great Stiggins tribe of whom Hartley Venn had told her. Nevertheless, she was in Philip's hands; and, like the birds on the solitary's island, she had not yet learned to distrust mankind, because she only knew one man.

It does not befit this page to describe with greater detail the mockery of marriage which Mr. MacIntyre solemnly went through. Suffice it to say that, after reading a chapter of the Bible, he prayed. And after his prayer, making the two stand up, he joined their hands, pronounced them man and wife, and concluded by an exhortation mainly made up of what he still recollected of the shorter Catechism. What it wanted in unction it gained in doctrine; and though there was little in the discourse calculated to assist the bride in her duties of married life, there was plenty which might have been used as a rod and staff by the Calvinistic Christian. Lollie stood frightened and bewildered. For all through the "service," the thunder had been rolling and crashing, and the lightning seemed to play over the very house where this great wickedness was being committed. Even

Mr. MacIntyre was moved by it. It was one of those great thunderstorms which sometimes break over London, striking terror to all hearts, such as those which fell upon us last year—I mean the year of grace 1872—a fierce, roaring, angry thunderstorm. And as the lightning flashed across his eyes, and the thunder pealed in his ears, the minister fairly stopped in his discourse, and murmuring, "Hech! sirs, this is awfu'!" waited for the anger of the elements to subside.

But he ended at last, and, congratulating the bride, offered Philip one of the slips of paper, keeping the other for himself. Then he rubbed his hands and laughed—a joyless cackle. And then he produced a black bottle and a small cake, and poured out three glasses of wine. He drank off his own at a gulp, refilled it, and sat down rubbing his hands again.

This was Lollie's wedding breakfast.

Outside, the hail pattered against the windows, the thunder rolled, and the warm spring air seemed chilled again to winter.

Philip said nothing. A look was in his face such as neither MacIntyre nor Lollie had ever seen before—a sort of wild, terrified look; such a look as might be imagined in the face of a man who, after long planning, has at last com-

mitted a great and terrible crime; such a look as one would have if he heard the voice of God accusing him—the voice Philip heard in the storm. Men are so. That unlucky Jew whom the thunderstorm sternly rebuked for eating pork was not the first, nor will he be the last, to connect natural phenomena with his own misdoings. In the storm outside, Philip, with the superstition of a Creole, heard the anger of Heaven. It only echoed the remorse in his own heart. A second time he seized MacIntyre by the arm, and led him to the bed-room.

"Once again," he said, "I *must* speak to you. Tell me whether it is true—is it true—are we married? Speak the truth, or I will kill you!"

"You are married, Phil," returned the other. "No question can ever arise on the legality of the marriage until—until—"

"Until when?"

"Until you come into your property. And now, listen. There is, *perhaps*—I only say perhaps—a little irregularity. If you want to remove that, remember to take your wife into Scotland, whenever you please, and live with her as your wife, openly. Then you need fear nothing. I say this to make you quite certain; but I do not believe there can be any legal doubt."

Philip looked at him with a surprised air. Then, with great relief, he walked into the other room, where Lollie was standing waiting and puzzled.

"Laura, my darling," he cried, kissing her passionately. "My wife, my bride! we are married at last. If ever I desert you, may God desert me!"

She drew herself from his arms, not blushing, not coy, not ashamed; but only cold.

"We are really married?" she cried, clapping her hands. "I wasn't certain. And now we will go straight to Mr. Venn, and tell him."

The two men looked at each other.

"My child," said Philip, changing colour, "we must be married like everybody else, must we not?"

"But we are, Philip, are we not?"

"Yes, dear; but married people always go away for a journey together. You and I are going to France for a month. When we come back, we shall call at Mr. Venn's chambers."

She stamped her foot.

"I shall go to-day. You said I was to tell him to-day. I *will* tell him. Philip, if you do not go with me, I will go by myself."

"Make her write," whispered the man of experience.

"You certainly cannot go, Laura," said her husband. "That is impossible. But I tell you what you shall do. You shall write him a letter, telling him all. Mr. MacIntyre shall take it, and tell him the particulars. We have but a quarter of an hour to spare, for our train starts at once. Now, dear"—taking pen and paper—"sit down and write. It is best so—it is indeed."

She burst into tears. She declared that she had been deceived. She insisted on going at once to Gray's Inn. If Philip had not held her, she would have gone.

Mr. MacIntyre said nothing; only, when he caught Philip's eye, he pointed to the pens and paper. Meantime, it was a critical moment; and his nose, which he constantly rubbed, seemed bigger and redder than ever.

"Laura, you must not go to Mr. Venn to-day. It is absurd," pleaded Philip. "Sit down, now. Write; no one shall read what you say. And it shall be sent at once. But you cannot go to Gray's Inn."

Lollie sat down, and tried to write. But she burst into fresh tears, and was fain to bury her face in her hands.

"Women are so," whispered the Scotchman. "Obsairve. In ten minutes she will be laughing again."

In less than ten minutes she recovered, and tried to write. Philip waited patiently, watching her.

She began three or four sheets of note paper and tore them up. At last she wrote, hurriedly—

"DEAREST MR. VENN—My secret may now be told. I have done what you wished me so much to do. I have married a gentleman. I have married Mr. Philip Durnford; and I am always, and ever and ever, your own most grateful and most loving little girl—

"LOLLIE."

She folded it up, addressed it, and gave it to her husband.

"MacIntyre," said Philip, "take the note round, will you, this very day? Tell Mr. Venn that my wife and I are gone to France—probably to Normandy—for a month; that we shall call upon him directly we return; that my greatest wish is to gain his friendship. Will that do for you, Laura?"

"Philip," she said, taking his hand—"now you are really kind."

"That is my own Laura. But now we must make haste. I have got your boxes at the station."

CHAPTER IV.

"I AM ill at ease to-night," said Hartley, on the Wednesday evening, when Jones and Lynn found him at the Rainbow. "I am low-spirited. Forebodings, like the screech-owl's mew, oppress me. Laura was to have told me some grand piece of news to-day, and has not come. Then there was the thunder. I am afraid of thunder. Engineers ought to turn their attention to it. Bring me some bitter beer, George—unless the thunder has turned it sour.

"I like this place," he went on. "It is quiet. The mutton is good, the beer is good, and there is an ecclesiastical air about it. The head waiter resembles an elderly verger without his gown. The manager might pass for a canon; and as for the carver, I have never known any one be-

neath the dignity of a prebendary grow bald in that singular manner.

"Life, Jones," he continued, in the course of his dinner, "may be compared to a banquet. You have, perhaps, often anticipated this comparison."

"Not I," said Jones—"not I, myself. But Longfellow has.

'Life is but an endless banquet,
Where we still expectant sit;
Be not thou a cold wet blanket,
Damping all thy neighbour's wit.

Chops for one; and for another,
Turkey stuffed with truffles gay.
Only bread for me. My brother,
Turn the carver's eye this way.

Let us all be up and eating,
With a heart for any slice:
Beef grows cold, and life is fleeting;
Pass the champagne and the ice.'"

Venn repeated his first words, and resumed the topic.

"When it comes to my turn to be served, the noble host, addressing me with a countenance full of benevolence and friendship, says, 'Hartley, my dear boy, take another disappointment.' It would be bad manners, you know, to refuse.

Besides, I am not quite certain how a refusal would be received. So I bow and smile: 'Thank you, my Lord. One more, if you please. A very little one, with gravy.'"

"Gravy! Is gravy the alleviator—?"

"Gravy, Jones, is the compensator. So I get helped again, and sigh when the plate comes back to me. In the distribution of good things, no one is consulted; but, by tacit agreement, we show our good breeding by pretending to have chosen. So, too, I believe, when convicts at Portland converse, it is considered manners to take no notice of each other's chains. I might prefer, perhaps, pudding and port, such as my neighbour gets. But I am resigned."

He sighed heavily, and went on eating his dinner with a tremendous appetite.

"Let us have," he said, when they had finished, "a Chorus night. Arthur Durnford is coming. Not a regular Chorus, but a Chorus of emergency. I hope it will not thunder any more."

"I have been making observations lately," he began, "on a class of women hitherto little studied. Speak up, Jones."

"Nay," said the dramatist, "I was but thinking

of the old lines—I forget the author—about women—

'Virtue and vice the same bait have:
On either's hook the same enticements are—
Woman lures both the base and brave,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.'"

"There is method in his madness," said Venn. "It is to be regretted only that Virtue does not always choose the bait with the same discrimination as Vice. This, however, is a wide subject. I was about to call the attention of the Chorus to the Woman who sniffs. About a week ago, having nothing to do, I got into a Favourite omnibus for an hour or two of quiet thought. The rattle of the omnibus glasses, when the wind is westerly, I find conducive to meditation; and as the Favourite line runs from Victoria to the extreme verge of civilization at Highgate, there is ample time. Several women got in, and I noticed—perhaps it was partly due to the time of year—several sniffs as each sat down and spread her petticoats. Your regular female omnibus passenger always takes up as much room as she can, and begins by staring defiantly round. I was at the far end, whither I had retired to avoid an accusation of assault; for they kick your shins across the narrow passage, and then give you in charge, these ladies. So

delicate, my friends, is the virtue of the class to which I allude, that even the suspicion of an attack is resented with this celestial wrath. Presently, however, I being the only male, there came in a young person, quiet, modest, and retiring. She made her way to the far end, and sat down next to me. Instantly there was fired a volley—a hostile salute—from seven noses: a simultaneous sniff of profound meaning. Versed in this weapon of feminine warfare, and therefore understanding the nature of the attack, the new-comer blushed deeply, and dropped her veil. It was like the lowering of a flag. I took the earliest opportunity of tendering her respectfully the compliments of the season; and, in spite of a second and even a fiercer attack, we held our own, and conversed all the way to Highgate. Coming back by the same omnibus, I insensibly glided into a vision."

"Good," said Jones, "let us have the vision."

"Methought I stood on an eminence and looked down, myself unseen, upon an island where men and women wandered about, of uncouth form and strange proportions. Some with venomous tongues, which lolled out in perpetual motion, yet saying nothing; some with trumpet-like noses; some with curiously deformed fingers; some with large and goggle eyes; and

some with heads of enormous dimensions. This, my guide—I had an angel with me, of course—told me, was one of the lesser islands of Purgatory. It appears that Dante was quite wrong in his account of that place, which consists really of a group of contiguous islands, like the Bermudas. I dare say I shall see some more of them before I die. The one I was standing over was appropriated to sinners in small things—backbiters, envious, malicious, mean, grasping, selfish (these last had enormous stomachs, like barrels of port wine), and attributors of unworthy and base motives (who were gifted with a corresponding prominence behind). I requested permission to inspect the company more closely, and was taken down into their very midst. I was astonished to find that a very large majority of them were women: their dress and behaviour showed them to belong to our own middle class. They were all English; because, by reason of the great babble of conversation that goes on among this sort of criminals, it is found advisable to separate the nationalities.

"Looking more closely, I observed that the men chiefly carried the protuberances, fore and aft, of which I have spoken; while the women, nearly one and all, had the trumpet-shaped

nose. The peculiarity of its shape was that the mouth of the trumpet was outward. Its musical effect could therefore only be produced by drawing the air towards the head, much in the same way as by a sniff. This struck me as a very singular arrangement. I was also informed that most of them, on their first arrival, had but very small trumpet noses; but that these, by dint of practice, increased daily and gradually, until they arrived at the gigantic proportions which I saw around me. They began by being proud of this growth; but by degrees grew alarmed, and were seriously inconvenienced by its great size. They then began to reduce its dimensions, by allowing it to remain, so to speak, unexercised; and if, as sometimes happened, they arrived at a perception of its manifest ugliness, they discontinued its use altogether, when it totally vanished. Others had the great tongues of which I have spoken. They were too big to use for speech; but, as their owners were always wanting to communicate some fresh piece of malicious gossip, they were perpetually wagging and bobbing, though no articulate sound came forth. The possessors of the tongues were more melancholy of aspect than the trumpet-nosed sisters, because they were debarred from the use of their instruments.

altogether. The tongue followed the same laws as the nose, and there were even women provided with both tongue and nose. While I was contemplating these unhappy victims of vice, my attention was directed by my guide to a young lady of about twenty-five, whose nose had at its extremity the merest rudimentary mouthpiece—so small as to be almost a beauty spot—suggestive only of where a trumpet had formerly been. My guide accosted her, and requested her to give a history of herself. She smiled and complied.

"'I was the daughter of a professional man, living in the neighbourhood of Russell-square. We were not rich, but we were well off. I was sent to a boarding-school at Brighton, where the principal things we were taught were to dress well, to aspire to a wealthy husband, to despise people of lower rank, to aim at getting as much amusement out of life as possible, to consider the admiration of men as the glory of a woman's life, and to regard the labour of men as performed only with one aim—to provide dress and a good establishment for their wives. This was the kind of education in our fashionable boarding-school; and when my sister and I came back to Russell-square, we were fully provided with all the weapons for that warfare which constitutes

the life of most women. I found, wherever I went, nearly all girls the same as ourselves. We were good, inasmuch as we all went to church regularly, and would have done nothing wrong. But we filled up our time with frivolity and gossiping. We were petty in our vices, and therefore, you see, our punishment is petty.' She pointed to her nose, whereon the least tip of a kind of button marked the place where the mouthpiece had been only five minutes before. 'The evil we did was not very great, and so our punishment is light. Even this is generally removed, if we repent.'

"'Do you repent?' I asked.

"'Oh, yes,' she said; 'the lives of women, which might be so smooth, so happy, and full of love, are eaten into and poisoned by these habits of malice and envy. You men think us angels, and when you marry us and find out that we are full of faults, you begin to decry the whole sex. When will some one teach us that largeness of heart and nobleness that so many men have?'"

"A most sensible young woman," Jones interrupted.

"At this moment, the button at the end of her nose entirely disappeared, and she vanished.

"'Where is she gone?' I asked my guide.

"There was that in his face which betokened temper. I fancy he must have been paid a per centage on the inhabitants of his island, or taken them on board by contract, according to number; for he refused to answer me, and was on the point of ordering me to move on, when I awoke."

"The young woman, you say, is in the Bermudas," said Jones. "I would she were in the arms of one who would rightly appreciate her.

> 'Where the remote Bermudas ride,
> A trumpet-nosed maid I espied;
> And, as I looked her through and through,
> Her imperfections thus she blew—
> "In Purgatory still I sniff,
> And I will gladly furnish, if
> You wish it, such a dismal tale,
> As well may frighten maidens all."'

I leave out a good many lines, which I have forgotten:—

> 'So sang she with the trumpet nose;
> My own, with sorrow at her woes,
> I loudly blew; and as she spoke,
> The neighbouring sniffs the echoes woke.'

I believe the lines were originally Andrew Marvell's."

It was Jones's hard fate in the Chorus, that

whatever he quoted nobody seemed to take any notice. Venn's face betrayed no signs of having heard what he said, while Lynn, as usual, smoked in his chair, saying nothing at all. For Lynn was one of those men who very seldom speak at all; and when they do, speak with more earnestness and energy than is generally heard.

Arthur, however, laughed; and the spectacles of Jones beamed gratefully on him.

"My cousin Philip," said Arthur, "started an infamous theory, some little time ago, that women prefer warmth to anything else in the world."

"Well," said Venn, "there may be something to be said for it. I believe that he is partly right. Women live in the house. Their ideas of life are those of the domestic circle. To have everything pleasant, comfortable, and elegant round them is quite a natural thing to desire. It is perhaps a brutal way of putting it, to say that they like to be warm. In the Chorus, we prefer a more indirect way of approaching a subject."

"Poor Phil takes direct views," said Arthur.

"Bring him here, and we will cure him," said Jones. "On the subject of women, there is nothing so elevated as the views of the Chorus

—the Sophoclean Chorus. We are, if we are nothing else, Sophoclean in our views of love.

'Love, the unconquered, thou whose throne
Is on youth's fair and rounded cheek,
Whom neither strong, nor brave, nor weak,
Can e'er escape—thee, thee we own.

Thou by thy master magic's aid
Cheatest keen eyes that else see well;
And o'er the loudest-sniffing maid
Pourest the glamour of thy spell.

The nymph whose deepest, fondest prayer
Is for a sheltered nook and warm,
Glows with a thousand fancies rare,
Lit with thy pyrotechnic charm.'"

"I suppose you will say that Sophocles wrote that?" growled Lynn.

"A free imitation only. It may, perhaps, in some points excel the original. I say nothing."

"They talk a great deal," said Lynn, breaking his usual silence, "of educating women, and making them less frivolous. Of course, the immediate result is to send them to the opposite extreme. Now, of all the odious women you can meet, give me the strong-minded."

"Do not give her to *me*," said Jones.

"But it's all nonsense. They have made a college for them, and have Cambridge men

there to teach them. In other words, they are going to make them second-rate scholars and third-rate mathematicians. What on earth is the use of that?"

"Is it," asked Venn, "the function of the Chorus to discuss female education?"

"Why not?" returned Lynn. "By Jove! I've a good mind to have a vision too."

"Do," said Jones. "Two visions in the same evening are at least more than we could have expected."

Lynn smoked meditatively for a few moments.

"I dreamed a dream," he began. "I thought that I stood in the world of the future—the future of a hundred years. Woman was emancipated, as they said. Every woman did, like all men do now, what was right in her own eyes. They could preach, teach, heal, practise law, live alone, and be as free as any man can be now."

"Well?" asked Jones, for Lynn stopped.

"Well, I can't be as graphic as Venn was, because I have not the art of telling a story. I walked about the streets of London. I went into the houses, into the clubs, into the theatres —everywhere. The first thing that struck me was the entire mixture of the sexes. Women were everywhere. They drove cabs, they were

markers at billiard tables, they kept shops, they plied trades, they were in the public offices—for everything was open to public competition. I talked to some of them. I found they were very much changed from what I remembered them. Not only were they coarse in appearance and manners, but they seemed to have lost the delicacy of woman's nature. The bloom was off the youngest of them. Men, too, had lost all their old deference and respect. There were none of the courtesies of life left; for the women had long since revolted against being considered the weaker sex. A new proverb had arisen—'The six-shooter makes all equal.' Every woman carried one, ostentatiously; not, I fancied, so much for self-protection as for purposes of attack. Their talk seemed loud and coarse, their jokes were club jokes, their stories were like those we hear on circuit and in mess-rooms. Their dress was altered, too. The old robes were discarded, and short kilts, with a tight-fitting jacket, seemed to be all the fashion. I asked my guide—did I say I had a guide?"

"You did not," said Jones. "Was he an angel?"

"Of course I had an angel. I asked him—or her—if they were all married women? Marriage, she told me, had been abolished by a

large majority of women, as contrary to the true spirit of liberty. This was directly against the wish of the men, who, it seemed, desired to retain the custom. As, however, the ceremony is one which requires the consent of two, it was abolished. Then the men turned sulky, and formed a kind of union or guild for the protection of the marriage laws. For a time it appeared as if the world would be depopulated, the statistics of the Registrar showed a falling-off in the number of births, which excited the gravest apprehensions. This league, however, fell to the ground from want of strength in the weaker brethren. After that, all went well. The laws of property were altered, and an old law, belonging to an obscure Indian tribe in the Neilgherry Hills, was introduced. By virtue of this, property descended only through the mother. The interests of freedom were served, it is true; but it seemed to me as if there were some losses on the other hand, for all the men seemed dejected and lonely. There were no longer any high aims; no one looked for anything more than worldly advantage; no one dreamed of an impossible future, as we do now; there were no enthusiasts, no reformers, no religious thinkers, no great men. All was a dead level. I asked my guide if there were any ex-

ceptions—if what I saw really represented the actual world. She confessed it did; but she boasted, with pride, that the world was now reduced to a uniform mediocrity. No one looked for anything better, therefore no one tried for anything better; no one praised anything good, therefore no one tried to do anything good; there were no prizes for excellence, therefore no one was excellent. But it all seemed dreary, stupid, and immoral as a modern music hall; and I awoke, glad to find that it was, after all, only a dream. I forgot to tell you that there were no homes—there were no families. Children were sent out to be nursed, and the necessity of labour on the part of the women necessitated the abolition of the maternal instinct."

"Is that all?" said Jones.

"It is," said Lynn; "and, before you make a rhyme about it—I can see you are meditating one—I just wish to state my moral. Women are only what their circle of men make them. If they are frivolous, it is because the men are frivolous; if they are vain, it is because the men teach them vanity. But men have always to fall back upon their one great quality—their purity. Deference to a quality which they so seldom possess seems to me the truest safeguard

for women, and the thing most likely to be a restraint upon men. Education, emancipation, suffrage—it is all infernal humbug. We confuse words. We call that education which is only instruction; we call emancipation what is a departure from the natural order; we take woman from her own sphere and put her into ours, and then deplore the old subjection of the sex. Good God! sir—man is the nobler as well as the stronger. His function is to work—to do; to drag the world along, to fight against and keep down the great surging sea of sin and misery that grows with our civilization and keeps pace with our progress. But woman's function is to stand by and help; to train the children, to comfort the defeated, and succour the wounded. Why, in the name of all the—all the saints, should she want to leave her own work and take ours?"

CHAPTER V.

ON that Wednesday night, when Hartley Venn went to bed, it was late, even for him; and when, at six in the morning, a fierce knocking came to his bed-room door, it was some fifteen minutes or so before he could quite make up his mind that he was not dreaming. At last, however, he roused himself sufficiently to be certain that somebody was actually knocking. Mrs. Peck was, in fact, the disturber of his rest. She was beating on the panel with a hammer, in despair of being able to awaken him in any other way. He half opened the door, cautiously, and peered through to discover the cause of this phenomenon.

"Mrs. Peck," he said, "we have known each other now for a great many years, and I never before remember you doing so ridiculous a thing

as to call me at six, the very hour when civilized life is on the point of recovering its strength. Pray, Mrs. Peck, do you take me for the early worm?"

The old woman pushed the door open, and came into his bed-room, looking curiously round. She was not, taking her at the best, a pleasant specimen of womanhood to look upon; but this morning she looked even less attractive than usual. For her false front was slipping off sideways; her black stuff dress was covered with mud; her wrinkled old face was begrimed with dirt, and puckered up with trouble; and Venn, rubbing his eyes, gradually awoke to the consciousness that she was staring at him with frightened eyes, and that something had happened.

Realizing this, he stepped back and got into bed, disposing the pillows so that he could give audience with an air of preparedness. Nothing, he used to say, speaking after the manner of Charles the Second's period, makes a man look more ridiculous in the eyes of his mistress than an appearance of haste; and whatever happens, it may as well be received with dignity, which only costs a little time for reflection. Now, there was no possibility, short of genius for dignity, of preserving a dignified appearance while

shivering on a mat with but one garment on, and that of the thinnest and lightest kind. Therefore, he retreated to the bed; and, propped up by the pillows, prepared to receive Mrs. Peck with self-respect. Not one thought of danger to himself: not one gleam of suspicion about the girl.

The old woman came in, confused and trembling. She looked about in a dazed sort of way, and then sank into a chair, crying—

"Oh, Mr. Venn, what have you done with her? What have you done with her?"

All Venn's dignity vanished. He fell half back on the pillow for a moment, and then started up, and caught the old woman by the arm.

"Done with her? Done with her? Done with her? Speak, Mrs. Peck. Tell me what you mean."

"You know, sir," she said. "You know who I mean. What have you done with her, I say? What have you done with the girl as you petted and made so much of, till she wasn't fit company for her grandmother? Oh, I aint afraid to speak. Where is she, I say? Where have you gone and hid her away? But I'll find her—if I search all London through, I'll find her. Oh, my fine grand-daughter, that was why he wanted you up

here every day, and nothing too good for you: and lessons every day, and grand clothes. And what am I to say now to the people that cried out how good she was? And where, oh, where is my 'lowance for her?"

Venn stared at her, speechless.

"Give her back to me, Mr. Venn. Nobody knows nothing. It shall all be as it used to be. Only let her come back, and we can make up a story and stop their mouths. Nobody knows."

"Woman!" cried the man, not knowing what he said, "woman! you are mad—where is Lollie?"

"And you, too, that I thought the best of men. You made her a little lady, so that all the people envied her. And one pound ten a week gone! You made her so good that not a creature could find a word to say against her. But you are all wicked alike. And now it's you. And after all these years. And I'm to lose my 'lowance, and go into the workus."

Her voice changed into a sort of wail, for her feelings were divided between the loss of her grand-daughter and the probable loss of her allowance.

"Give her back to me, Mr. Venn. It isn't only the loss of the one pound ten a week, paid regular, though the Lord knows it's the parish I

must come on. Give her back to me, and I'll go on my bended knees to you. Say she's good, and I'll pray for you all the days of my life; and go to St. Alban's, though I can't abide their ways, a purpose. Oh, give her back to me! Tell me where you've put her."

She sat down exhausted, in the chair by the bedside.

"It isn't the 'lowance I mind so much; nor it isn't the girl, because we never had much to say to each other, her and me. But it is the people. And they will talk. And one pound ten a week's an awful sum to lose. And see, Mr. Venn—I know that gentlemen will be gentlemen; and though the pore men curse, the pretty ones always goes to the gentlemen. That's right, I suppose! though why it's right, God only knows. But give her back to me; for I am an old women, and respected, by reason of my grand-daughter. Give her back to me, Mr. Venn. I mind an old story about a man and a ewe lamb, and let me look the folk in the face again, for the love of God!"

He was standing before her in his night shirt all the time, not knowing what to say, feeling dizzy and confused.

Now he took her by the arm, and led her to the door.

"One moment, Mrs. Peck. Sit down and wait while I dress. I shall not be long. Don't say another word till I come."

He dressed with feverish haste, though his fingers were trembling, and he could not find the buttons. Then, after ten minutes or so, he came into the sitting-room, and, pouring out a glass of spirits, made the poor old creature drink it down.

"Now, Mrs. Peck, let us try and get all our courage. I have not seen her—believe me, my poor woman—since Tuesday evening."

"She came home on Tuesday evening at ten o'clock."

"Yes; she was to have come and told me something yesterday."

"She went out at half-past nine yesterday morning, and she never came back. I waited for her till ten last night, and, thinking she was with you, I went sound asleep, and didn't wake till this morning at six. And then I looked in her room, for the door was open, and she wasn't there. And the workus is all I've got to look to."

Venn's hands were trembling now, and his face white.

"She cried when she left me on Tuesday. She had her secret then. Mrs. Peck, remember,

my little girl is good. She has done no harm—she *can* do nothing wrong. Fool that I was when she wanted to tell me her secret, and I would not hear it. Where is she? But she is a good girl. Only wait—wait—wait—we shall see."

He spoke hopefully, but his heart fell. Nothing wrong? Whence, then, those tears? Why had she been so sad for two or three weeks? Why had she harped upon her secret? And yet, what could she do? Always with him—whose acquaintance could she make?

"You're telling me gospel truth, sir?" cried his laundress. "Swear it—swear it on the Bible."

"I don't know where my Bible is—the Lord forgive me!" he answered. "Do not let us be miserable," he went on, with an attempt at cheerfulness. "I expect she is stopping out with some friends."

"She has no friends. Never a soul has she ever spoken to, for twelve years, but you and me, and Miss Venn."

"Perhaps she is up there. I will go and see."

He tried to cheer up the old woman; invented a thousand different ways in which the girl might have been obliged to pass the night away from home; and then, because his own heart

was racked and tortured, he hurried off to his sister's.

Sukey he met on her way to early service—that at half-past seven. It was one of the peculiarities of that young lady to find a considerable amount of enjoyment in these extra-parochial, so to speak, and extraordinary forms of religion.

"Hartley!—you, of all men in the world, at half-past seven!"

"Sukey, have you got Lollie with you?"

"Laura? I haven't seen her for six weeks—not since she had tea with me. But, Hartley, what is the matter?"

He caught hold of the railing which ran round the garden of the square, and almost fell. For it was his one hope; and his head swam.

"God help us all!" he murmured—"my little girl is lost."

What could she say?

"She left me on Tuesday evening. She told me that yesterday I should learn a secret which would please me more than anything—she even offered to tell it me. She was excited and nervous when she said good night to me; and yesterday evening she never went home at all. Sukey, don't speak to me—don't say anything, because I cannot bear it. Come and ask in a day or two. Sukey, you believe in prayer. Go

into church, and pray as you never prayed before. Throw all your heart into your prayers for the child. Pray for her purity—pray for her restoration—pray for my forgiveness; or—no—why do men always want to push themselves to the front?—pray, Sukey, that my ill-training may bear no ill fruit. And yet, God knows, I meant it all for the best."

He turned away and left her. She, poor woman, with the tears in her eyes, went back to her own room; and there, not in the artificial church, with the cold and perfunctory service, but by her own bedside, knelt and prayed for her brother and his darling, while sobs choked her utterance, and the tears coursed down her cheeks.

Hartley returned to his chamber, and found Mrs. Peck still there. The effect of the excitement upon her was that she was actually cleaning things. He tried to cheer her up, and then went to the police-station, where they heard what he had to say, made notes, looked wise, and promised great things, after he had given an exact description of her dress and appearance.

What next?

"Had she any friends?"

"None," Mrs. Peck had replied.

He knew of an acquaintance, at least; though Mrs. Peck had never heard of her. There was a certain Miss Blanche Elmsley, third-rate actress, figurante, anything, attached to the fortunes of Drury Lane Theatre. Her papa, who rejoiced in the name of Crump, was the proprietor of a second-hand furniture shop in Gray's Inn-road. He had not much furniture, but he sold anything, bought anything; and was not too proud to do odd jobs at the rate of a shilling an hour. Moreover, Mr. George Augustus Frederick Crump, christened after one of the late lamented Royal Princes, was a most respectable man, and highly esteemed in his quartier. He was the worshipful Master of a Lodge of Ancient Druids, and accustomed to take the vice-chair at a weekly harmonic meeting. His daughter, Mary, was a child to whom Venn, who knew everybody, had been accustomed to make little presents, years before. She was about five or six years older than Laura. When she grew up to woman's estate she obtained—chiefly through Venn's interest—a post as assistant in the refreshment department of one of the leading railway stations. Then he lost sight of her altogether till a twelvemonth or so later, when Lollie came to him one night with a piteous tale: how that

poor Mary, for some reason unknown to her, had been turned from her father's door, and was penniless and houseless. Then Hartley Venn —a Samaritan by legitimate descent, as much as the present Sheikh, Yakoob Shellaby—went to the rescue; the end being that he saw the poor girl through a good deal of trouble, and by dint of wonderful self-sacrifice, living on herbs and cold water for a quarter or so, managed to put things straight for her.

The Samaritan, you know very well, not only bound up the wounds which the wicked robbers had made, but poured in oil. Not content with that, he lifted the poor man, all bleeding as he was, upon his own beast, doubtless covered with a new and highly respectable saddle-cloth, trudging alongside—and those roads of Palestine, unless it was the Roman road, were none of the best, mind you—until he came to the nearest Khan, where he bargained with the landlord for a small sum. The Priest and the Levite, I make no doubt, would have done exactly the same, but for the look of the thing. It would seem too disreputable for persons of their respectability to be seen tramping along the road with a bleeding man upon their private ass, bedabbling their saddle-cloth. Yet make no doubt that their hearts were deeply touched, and I think I

can fancy the Priest making a very fine point of it, in his way, next Sabbath day's discourse. It would turn on the duty of being Prepared.

Mary's father was the priest. So, with a pang at his heart and an oath on his lips, he told the girl to go, and never again to darken his doors.

She went. His respectability was saved. Close by, she met little Lollie on her way home. She knew her by sight, and told her some of the story. The rest we know.

Venn was her Samaritan.

Mary was sitting in her second floor back, making a dress for the baby, and crooning a tune in as simple freshness of heart as if she had never sinned at all. The blessed prerogative of maternity is to heal, at least for the time, all wounds. Besides, we can't be always crying over past sins. When the sun shines, the birds will sing. In her child, Mary had forgotten her troubles. Man leaves father and mother, and cleaves to his wife. Woman leaves father and mother, husband and lover, and forgets them all, and cleaves to her little ones.

Venn came in, hurried and excited.

"Where is Lollie?" he asked. "Have you seen Lollie?"

"Your little girl, Mr. Venn? Oh, what has come to her?"

Hartley's last slender reed of hope was broken. He sat down, and dropped his face in his hands. Then he looked round, blankly.

"If I could find him!" he groaned—"if I could find him! By G—d!—if I should but for once come across him somewhere!"

Polly understood in a moment.

"Don't say that, Mr. Venn. Don't tell me that Lollie, of all girls in the world—"

"Hush! Perhaps—perhaps—Mary, you know nothing of it?"

"God forgive me!" sobbed Mary. "Mr. Venn, I'd rather my little boy died in my arms; and then, Heaven knows, I'd lie down and die myself. Lollie! Oh, it was she who brought me to you in all my trouble. What should I have been without her? Where should I be now?"

"I must go," said Venn, rising abruptly. "Think of her, my girl. If you can devise any plan for looking after her, tell me. If you can think of anybody or anything—remember that every penny I have in the world I will spend to bring her back. Where can I look for her—where?"

He spread out his hands in his distress, and walked backwards and forwards in the little room.

"Don't be angry with me, Mr. Venn, at what

I'm going to say. She must have gone off with some one. No doubt he promised to marry her. They all do. And if he does it, you will have her back in a day or two, with her husband, asking for your forgiveness. And if he doesn't, why, then—why then, Mr. Venn, don't let us think of it. But if she comes back, all wretched and tearful, will you forgive her, Mr. Venn—will you forgive her?"

"Forgive her? Is there anything my child could do that I would not forgive? You don't understand, Mary. She is my life. I have no thought but for her. In all these years, while she has been growing up beside me, every hour in my day seemed to belong to the child. What could I not do for her? Let her come back, and all shall be as it was before. But, no. That, at least, cannot be. The fruit of the tree of knowledge, of good and evil, prevents that. Eden is shut out from us. But let her come back, and we may be but as another Adam and Eve, making aprons to hide the memories of our souls."

"Perhaps they were happy," said Mary the mother, "because they had children."

"I don't know," said Venn. "History says very little about it. Perhaps they were. Let us hope so. Good-bye, girl."

She took his hand, and, out of her gratitude and sympathy, raised it to her lips. The action had all the grace of a duchess, though it was but in a poorly furnished lodging—bed-room, sitting-room, and all in one—and the performer was only a ballet girl.

From her, Venn went to Lynn's rooms. These were at the top of an endless staircase in the Temple.

"You, Venn!" said Lynn, opening the door. "I thought it was the long-expected case. What has brought you here at this time of day?"

Venn sat down, and answered nothing. After a minute or so, which his thoughts turned into half an hour, he got up again.

"I must go," he said. "I've stayed here too long."

He put on his hat, and made for the door, with staggering step. Then Lynn caught him by the arm, and forced him into an arm-chair.

"For God's sake, Venn, what is the matter?"

Hartley looked at him in a dazed way. Then he fairly fainted, falling forwards. It was two o'clock, and he had eaten nothing all day. Lynn lifted him, and laid him on the sofa—pouring water on his forehead, which was burning. Presently he recovered a little, and sat up.

"Do you remember our idle talk last night, Lynn?"

"Perfectly. What about it?"

"Do you remember what we said about women?"

"What about it?"

Venn was silent again. Then he went on, with a deep, harsh voice—

"I found a little child. In my loneliness, and the despair that followed all my ruined hopes, I made her the one joy and comfort of my life."

"Laura?"

"I brought her up myself, and taught her all that I thought the child should know. I forgot one thing."

"Venn, what has happened?"

"I forgot religion. All the rules of right and wrong do not come by observation. The habit of fearing God comes by teaching. But I loved her, Lynn—I loved her. She looked to me as a kind of elder brother; but I—I loved her not as a little sister. I looked for a time when she should be old enough to hear the love story of a man nearly twenty years her senior. I thought to win her heart, and not her gratitude. So I was content to wait. Her only joy in life was to come to me. But I forgot that there are wolves abroad. If ever I meet the man——

But it is idle threatening. Old friend of twenty years, if I thought you had done this thing, I would strangle you as you stand there."

"But, Venn—Venn, what is it?"

"I was reading a story in a novel the other day—a French novel. There was a Laura in it, and a man: a foolish sort of story. She left him one evening, hanging upon his neck, vowing a thousand loves, showering kisses upon him. She said she was going to the seaside—to Dieppe—somewhere for a fortnight. She wrote to him a fortnight later, when he expected her back—told him in three lines that she had left him for ever, that she could never see him again, that she was to be married to some one else. Not a word, you see, of regret. Nothing left, no memory at all of the days they had spent together. A foolish story. I laughed when I read it.

"He, who was only a poor sort of loving fool, and believed that women could be true, sat down in his lonely room and cried. Then he wrote to a post-office where she might possibly go and ask for letters, and told her to be happy; that he forgave her; that if anything happened to her—any poverty, any distress—he was still her friend. I thought what an ass he was. Her name was Laura, too. That must have been

from her artistic instincts a deeper insight into the mystery of religion. After the service, she would go back to her husband, and pour into his wondering ears the new thoughts that filled her heart. He, for his part, sat like a Solomon, and shook his head, only half understanding what she meant. Nor did she quite know herself. The instinct of adoration, of submission; the sense of a protecting power; the sweetness of church music; the gorgeous ceremonial to which it was wedded—all these things coming freshly on the girl's brain confused and saddened her, even while they made her happier. For in these early days, when everything was new and bright, she was happy—save for that gnawing anxiety about Venn.

Tuesday came, and Wednesday, but no letter; and her heart fell.

"I shall write again, Philip. He must be ill. He would never else have left my letter unanswered."

Philip changed colour; for in the early days of dishonour men can still feel ashamed.

"If you like," he said, with an effort. "Yes, write again, dear. We will try one more letter before we go back to London. Sit down and write it now."

The second letter was harder to write than

the first. But she got over the beginning at last, and went on. After repeating all she had said in the first, she began to talk of the church:

"I have been to church. Oh, Mr. Venn, why did we not go together? There is no place where I am so happy. It seems as if I were protected—I don't know from what—when I am within the walls, and listening to the grand organ. When we go back to England, you will have to come with me. . . . Do not, dear Mr. Venn, keep me any longer in suspense. Write to me, and tell me you forgive me. I seem to see, now, more clearly than I did. I see how wrong I was, how ungrateful, how unkind to you. But only tell me you forgive me, and ease my heart."

This time, with less compunction, her husband quietly took the letter to a secluded spot under the cliffs, and tore it up. For, having begun, he was obliged to go on. Laura, he was determined, should have nothing whatever more to do with Mr. Venn. She should be his, his own, his only. Some men make angels of their wives. These are the highest natures: perhaps on that account the greatest fools in the eyes of the world. Philip did not commit this noble fault. He knew his wife was a

why I read the story. Laura—Laura—a lover's name."

"In Heaven's name, Venn, what has happened?"

"Women, you see," Venn went on, in a hard, unnatural voice, "require positive teaching. You must say to them, do this, do that, and avoid something else. I forgot this. I treated the girl as if she had been a boy.

"Life, you will observe, is a series of unexpected retributions. For every mistake you make, down comes the Avenger. No quarter is given, and no warning. It seems hard when you first begin to understand it, doesn't it?

"We have been accustomed to look at the disappointments of life as so much capital—the occasion for saying clever things. Why, Jones makes fifty rhymes every time he fails, and I say fifty remarkable things. And you utter fifty oaths. Here is only another disappointment. We will have another brilliant Chorus next week. Life's disappointments are so many of a small kind, that when a big one comes—the biggest that can come—we really ought to be prepared.

"I loved her, Lynn, I loved her."

All the time he had been sitting on the sofa, talking in this incoherent way, with his eyes

strained and his lips cracked. Then Lynn took him by the arm.

"Come back to Gray's Inn," he said. "We will take a cab."

He led him down the stairs, and took him back to his own chambers. When they got there, the old woman, still waiting for them, rushed forward.

"Have you found her, sir? Have you found her?"

And then Venn sat down in his old easy-chair, and cried like a child.

"I think," he said, presently, recovering a little, "that I will go to bed. The Kings of Israel, whenever they experienced any little disappointment, used to do it, and turn their faces to the wall. Ahab, you remember, in that affair of his about the vineyard. I shall turn my face to the wall. When I was ill as a child I used, directly I got into bed, to fancy myself in a coach and four; and the relief was wonderful. Good-bye, Lynn, it's very kind of you; but—but—well, you can go away now."

"I shall stay," said Lynn, not liking the way in which he talked—"I shall stay all night, and sleep on the sofa."

Venn went to bed; and his friend, getting a steak sent up at six, sat quietly waiting and

watching. At midnight, he stole into the bedroom. Venn was sleeping soundly, with his fair, smooth cheeks high up on the pillow. As Lynn bent over him, the lips of the sleeper parted; and, with that sweet, sad smile which was his greatest charm, he murmured, softly and tenderly—

"My little girl—kiss me again."

CHAPTER VI.

DO you know the coast of Normandy? It is a country that everybody thinks he knows well. We have all been to Dieppe, some even to Havre. Dear friends, that is really not enough. What you do not know is the existence of a dozen little watering-places between Havre and Boulogne, all charming, all quiet, all entirely French. These secluded retreats are like the triangles in the sixth book of Euclid's immortal work—they are all similar and similarly situated. Where the sea runs in and makes a bay, where a river runs down and mingles the fresh with the salt, where the cliffs on either side stoop to the earth and disappear in space, there lies the little fishing town. What it must be like in winter, imagination vainly endeavours to realize; but in

summer, between June and October, there are no pleasanter places for quiet folk to stay in. Right and left, the cliffs rise to a height of some hundreds of feet. You climb them in the morning after your coffee and brioche, and stride away in the fresh upland air, with the grass under your feet and the woods behind. As you go along, you see the girls milking the sleepy-eyed Norman cows, you salute the women going to market with their baskets, you listen to the lark, you watch the blue sea far away beyond, with perhaps a little fleet of fishing boats. Presently you turn back, for the sun is getting hot. Then you go down to the shore and bathe. Augustine, the fat, the bunchy, the smiling, the rosy-fingered, brings you a maillot. Clad in this comfortable garb, and throwing a sheet about you, you trip down the boards which lead to the sea, and enjoy a feeling of superiority when you feel all eyes turned to behold you swimming out to sea. Family groups are bathing together beside you—father of family and circle of children, bobbing, with shrieks, up and down; next to them some ancient dame, of high Norman lineage and wondrous aspect, gravely bobbing, held by both hands by the Amphibious One, who spends his days in the water and never catches rheumatism. Everybody bobbing. Then you

go back to breakfast. The table d'hôte might be better, but it is wholesome. Here you become acquainted with strange fish—conger eel, for instance; and you learn the taste of mussels. The claret might be a more generous wine, but it is light and sound. After your walk, you may drink a bottle for breakfast.

Presently you stroll into the town and look around. Here is a fisherman's church. In the little chapel, as you go in, are the ex voto pictures—they mean countless tears and anxiety. Here is the ship tossed by the storm; here the ship entering the port; here are the rags of a flag, the bits of an oar—all the little memorials of an escape from danger, aided by Our Lady of the Sea, influenced by the prayers of the faithful. Are we in the nineteenth century? So, too, the Roman sailor offered his ex voto to Venus Marina; while yonder priest, in stole, alb, and dalmatic, may stand for his predecessor of Brindisium two thousand years ago, who chanted the service to his goddess in the self-same dress, and very likely in the self-same Gregorian. Verily, my readers, we take a long time to change.

There is a quay. Lazy sailors lie about and talk. There is a smell of soup in the air, curiously blending with the tar. Over the cobbled

roads thunder the country carts with their bells. The diligence is preparing, with a tremendous clatter and bustle, to get under weigh; and where, in an English country town, would be dismal silence and sluggishness, are life, animation, activity.

At six you may dine—in fact, you must, if you want to dine at all. The dinner is the same as the breakfast. And after that you may go to the casino. Ah, the casino! It is the home of all dazzling pleasures. There is the theatre, with a stage the size of a dining-room table; then the ball-room, with a piano and violin for music—no better music can be found; and there are the young bloods of the place, panting for the fray, with waxed moustache, and patent leather boots, the Don Juans of a thousand harmless amourettes. For here, mark you, we have not the morals of Paris. And the young ladies. They are not pretty, the Norman girls, after our notions of beauty. Some of them are too big in the nose, some of them are flat-faced, some of them are inclined to be "hatchety." But they are gracieuses. Say anything you will of the Frenchwomen, but tell me not that they are clumsy. Always graceful, always at ease, always artistic. I believe, speaking as a bachelor, and therefore as a fool, that a Frenchwoman

is, above all, the woman one would emphatically never get tired of. Pretty faces pall, pretty little accomplishments are soon known by heart. A loving heart may be no prevention against that satiety which cometh at the end of sweet things. In love, as in cookery, one wants a little—eh? a very little—sauce piquante. Now, the Frenchwoman can give it you.

And at eleven o'clock you may go to bed; because, if you sit up, you will be the only soul awake in all the town. They are all alike, as I said before. I have seen them all. The prettiest of them is Etretat, the sweetest of watering-places, with its little châlets perched on the hill-sides, its perforated rocks, its sharp cliffs, and its gardens. But it is also the dearest. Reader of the middle class, sensible reader, who, like me, does not pretend to be a Milord, go not to Etretat to stay. Go rather to little Yport, close by, where the établissement is no bigger than a family pew, and where in a day you will be the friend of all the good people—chiefly connected with the cotton, or perhaps the cider, interests—who are staying there for the benefit of the sea breezes.

It was to Vieuxcamp that Philip took his bride. They arrived there the day after their marriage. Laura was too confused with the

novelty of everything to be able to think. She was wild with excitement. This, then, was the world. How big it was! These were the people who spoke French. Why, the little children talked it better than she did, after all her lessons! Then, the Norman caps, and the cookery, and the strangeness of it all. I don't believe there is anything in the world—not even love's young dream, or love's first kiss, or the first taste of canvas-back, or the first oyster of the season, or the forbidden port, or a glass of real draught bitter after years abroad; or the sight of those you love, when you come home again; or the news that your play is accepted, or the first proof-sheet, or a legacy when you are sick with disappointment, or praise when you are dying with fatigue, or a laudatory review: there is not one of these delights—I forgot to mention twins, but not even that—which comes up to the first joy of seeing a foreign land, and that land France.

Lollie saw some English children at Dieppe the morning after they came.

"Oh, Philip," she cried, "what a shame to bring those children here! Think of the happiness they will miss when they grow up."

That, as the Yankees say, is so.

He brought her by diligence from Dieppe to

Vieuxcamp, and they began the usual life of the place. He had taken the best rooms in the hotel, where they could sit and look at the sea. Laura had not seen it since she went with Sukey to Deal, eight years ago. In the morning, they bathed together in the pleasant French fashion. In the hot daytime they stayed indoors, and read novels. In the evening, they went to the casino.

At the table d'hôte, Philip's wife was quite silent for three days. Then, to his utter amazement, she turned to her neighbour, a lively little Frenchwoman, who had addressed some remark to her, and answered her quite fluently, and in perfect French.

"Where did you learn it, my darling?"

"I learned it at home. Mr. Venn and I used to talk. But, somehow, I could not say a word at first. Now I begin."

And then the French ladies all made much of her, admiring the sweet innocence of her beauty, and that fair wealth of hair, which she wore loose and dishevelled at breakfast, and neatly bound up for dinner.

On the very first morning after their arrival, Philip found her, on coming in from a walk, writing a letter to Venn.

"That is right," he said. "Tell Mr. Venn

"MY DEAR Mr. VENN—I do not know how to begin my letter. You have heard my secret now, because Philip sent on my letter. I was so sorry not to be able to come with it myself. When I saw you on Tuesday, I came determined to tell you all, in spite of Philip's prohibition; but you would not hear it. And now I wish you had, because then you would have come yourself, and been present at my marriage. Yes, I am really and truly married. I cannot understand it at all. I keep turning my wedding ring round and round my finger, and saying that I have done the very thing you wanted me to do. And then I feel that I was wrong in not telling you of it. Directly after the marriage we came over here—Philip and I, and are going to stay for another fortnight. I will tell you all about the place and the people when I see you. But it is all so strange to me, that I feel giddy thinking about it. And you will like Philip, I know you will; if only because he is so kind to me and loves me. It is all through your kindness. I can never say or write what I feel towards you for it all. You will always be first in my thoughts. We are not very rich, I believe; but we have enough to live upon, and we are going to be happy. The old life has passed away, and all our pleasant

days; but the new ones will be better, only you will have to come and see me now. I think I shall be very happy as soon as I hear that you are satisfied and pleased with what I have done. Write at once, and tell me that you are, dear Mr. Venn, and then I shall dance and sing. Let me always be your little girl. I had to keep the secret for Philip's sake; but he always promised that as soon as we were married you should know everything.

"He is too good for me, too handsome, and too clever. Of course he is not so clever as you are. Nobody is. And I do not think he has ever written anything — at least, he has never told me of anything.

"Write to me at once, dear Mr. Venn, by the very next post that comes back. To-day is Saturday; I shall get your letter on Tuesday. Give my love to my grandmother. She will not miss me. And always believe me, dear Mr. Venn, your own affectionate and grateful little girl,

"LOLLIE DURNFORD."

Philip's handsome face grew ugly as he read the letter—ugly with the cloud of his negro blood. What business had his wife to write a letter so affectionate to another man? Jealousy

sprang up, a full-blown weed, in his brain. What right had she to love another man? His nostrils dilated, his forehead contracted, his lips projected. These were symptoms that accompanied the awakening of his lower nature.

Two men passed him as he sat on the beach. Quoth one to the other, as they both looked in his face—

"C'est probablement un Anglais?"

And the other made reply—

"Je crois que c'est un mulâtre. Peut être de Martinique."

He heard them, and his blood boiled within him. The lower nature was in command now. He tore the letter into a thousand fragments, and threw them into the air.

Then he resolved to go back and tell a lie. At any cost—at the cost of honour, of self-respect—he would break off all connection with this man. His wife should not know him any longer, should not write to him a second time.

He strolled back, angry and ashamed, but resolved.

Lollie was waiting for him, dressed for breakfast. He kissed her cheek, and tried to persuade himself that he was acting for the best.

"And what did you say to Mr. Venn, darling?"

"I said that I was married, and happy, and eager to get his letter to tell me that he is pleased."

"Why did you not write to your grandmother, my dear?"

"Oh," she replied, lightly, "she will hear from Mr. Venn. And, besides, as she cannot read, what does it matter? You know, she never liked me at all; and only kept me with her, I believe, on account of Mr. Venn. I must have been a great trouble to her."

Caresses and kisses; and Philip, with the ease of his facile nature, put behind him his deceit and treachery to be thought of another day. After all, letters do miscarry sometimes.

The honeymoon, married men of some standing declare, is wont to be a dreary season, involving so much of self-sacrifice and concession that it is hardly worth the trouble of going through it. It has some compensations. Among these, to Philip, was the real pleasure of reading all the thoughts of a pure and simple-minded girl. When he was under the influence of this maidenly mind, his mind—Augean stable though it was—seemed cleansed and purified. The prompting of evil ceased. The innocence of his youth renewed itself, and seemed to take once more, with a brighter plumage, a heavenward

flight—only while he was in her presence; and, as we have seen, a few words from his evil genius had power enough to make him worse than he was before. For the stream of Lollie's influence was a shallow one: it had depth enough to hide the accumulations of mud, but not enough to clear them away. Like the transformation scene in a theatre, for a brief five minutes all is bright, roseate, and brilliant. Before and after, the yellow splendour of the gaslight. With a lie hot upon his lips, with a new sin fresh upon his conscience, Philip yet felt happy with his wife. It is not impossible. The poor habitual criminals of the thieves' kitchen are happy in their way—boozing and smoking, though the policemen are gathering in pursuit, and they know their days of freedom are numbered.

"Tell me," said Philip, "did Mr. Venn never make love?"

"What a question!" she replied, laughing. "Mr. Venn, indeed! Why, he is as old—as old— No one ever made love to me except yourself. But take me down to breakfast. Philip, when we go back to London, will your own relations be ashamed of me?"

"I have no relations, dear, except a cousin. If he is ashamed of you, I shall wring his neck. But he will be proud of you, as I am proud of

my pretty wife. But for the present you must be content with your stupid husband. Can you?"

"Don't, Philip," said his wife. "And the bell has gone ten minutes."

And on the Sunday—next day—Lollie got a new experience of life.

It was after breakfast. They were strolling through the town. The bells were ringing in the great old church, so vast and splendid that it might have been a cathedral. And in one of the little streets, where there was a convent school, there was assembling a procession—all of girls, dressed in white, and of all ages and sizes, from the little toddler who had to be led, to the girl of twenty, gorgeous in her white muslins and her lace veil. As they stopped to look, the procession formed. At its head marched the toddler, supported by two a little taller than herself; and then, wedge fashion, the rest followed, the nuns, with their submissive, passionless faces, like the sheep of sacrifice, following after. And as they defiled into the street, they began to sing some simple French ditty—not more out of tune than could be expected from a choir of French country girls—and went on to the church. Philip and Laura followed. The girls passed into the church. As

the darkness of the long nave seemed to swallow them up, a strange yearning came over the girl.

"Philip, I should like to go into the church."

"Do, my dear, if you like. I shall go and stroll along the beach. You can go in and see the ceremony, whatever it is, and then come back to the hotel."

She walked hesitatingly into the church. A man with a cocked hat and a pike in his hand, beckoned her, and gave her a seat. She sat down and looked on. A tall altar, garnished with flowers and lights, men with coloured robes, boys with incense, and an organ pealing. In all her life of eighteen years, she had never been inside a church: in all her education, there had been no word of religion. Now, like another sense, the religious principle awakened in her; and she knew that she was, for the first time, worshipping God.

When the people knelt, she knelt, wondering. Always, the organ pealed and rolled among the rafters in the roof, and the voices of the singers echoed in her ears, and the deep bass of the priest sounded like some mysterious incantation. It was so grand, so sweet, this gathering of the folk with one common object. Her heart went

up with the prayers of the church, though she knew nothing of what they meant. Lines from poetry crossed her brain: words from some authors she had read. The Madonna and the Child looked on her smiling: the effigy of our Saviour seemed to have its eyes, full of tenderness and pity, fixed upon her. When next she knelt, the tears poured through her fingers.

The service ended. All went away except Laura. She alone sat silent and thinking.

"Madame would like to see the church?" asked the beadle.

She shook her head.

"Let me sit a little longer," she said, putting a franc into that too sensitive palm.

"Madame is right. It is cool in here." And left her.

She was trying to work it all out. She had discovered it at last, the secret which Venn's carelessness had kept from her. She knew the grave defect of her education: she had found the religious sense.

She rose at last, refreshed as one who, suffering from some unknown disease, suddenly feels the vigour of his manhood return. And when

she rejoined her husband, there shone upon her face a radiance as of one who has had a great and splendid vision.

For the child had wandered by accident into the Fold.

CHAPTER VII.

IN answer was to be expected from Venn in three or four days. Laura passed these in suspense and anxiety. Every morning she went to the church and heard the service, daily gaining

straight to my heart to see old Leatherflapper taking young Postobit in hand, and putting him up to every wrinkle on the board. True, there is a price to be paid—understood, never expressed: a fee for experience. But what that is worth having on earth is to be had for nothing? You would like to be introduced to this company of wise and benevolent men? You know their faces well. They are to be studied at every race meeting, seen in the Park on sunny days, at German spas, at Hurlingham—everywhere where excitement can be bought. And the bond that makes them such friends and such enemies—you guess it: Gambling. The universal passion. The passion of all times of life, from earliest youth to latest age; of all places, from Christian London to Buddhist Yeddo; of all periods, from the first recorded tradition of savage life till the Archangel shall sound the last trump; of men and women, from the tramp cardseller, who bets his sister two pennies to one against a favourite for a race, to the nobleman who stakes a fortune on a cast of the dice; the miser, the spendthrift, the stock-jobber, the prince—gambling has joys for all.

So the Burleigh was founded for play that might run to any height, for games prohibited at other places; as a rendezvous for every gentle-

man who wanted a little excitement, a place where there should always be "something doing." You must know the members by certain characteristic habits and ways they have. They breakfast late; they are fond of a devil early in the day; they take "pick-me-ups." In the daytime they are busy with their books. Notes addressed in female hands lie waiting for their arrival in the morning, the writing being generally of such a kind as to suggest a late acquisition of the art of penmanship. They have a keen, cold look about the eyes, where the crows-feet gather early. For the most part they dress very carefully; though, sometimes, just a day in advance of the fashion: they affect drab or brown gaiters and cloth-topped boots; carry, in this year of grace, their walking-canes by the ferule; and smoke eternally. From these gentlemen Philip's companions were chosen.

This was his club; this the place where he spent his days and nights, a short month after his marriage, while his wife stayed at home, or, if she went out at all, was afraid to go far for fear of meeting Mr. Venn. In this company, starting in July with his five hundred pounds and the proceeds of his commission—for he sold out—he was trying to make hay while the sun did not shine, and melting it all away.

He kept no accounts; but kept on digging at the little heap, ignorant and careless of how much was left. His great hope lay in his pluck and skill in playing cards, and betting on horse-races. He was often advised by Mr. MacIntyre, who had the useful talent of clear-headedness, and used to come to Notting-hill about Philip's breakfast-time; and then the two would sit and go through the "Calendar" and "Ruff's Guide," while the neglected girl looked on, and wondered what it was they talked about. It was one of her great sorrows at this time that she had no books to read—none of her old books; none of those old poets, which she and Mr. Venn used to pore over in the summer evenings, while the shadows fell upon the dingy old court of the Inn. Philip, who seemed to have given up his old reading tastes, had only a few novels. She had never read any novels at all until she went to France. Phil's did not please her. They were barrack novels, stories of camp life, sporting stories—books to her without interest. She could not read them, and put them down one after another—falling back upon the piano, for which she had no music, and could only play the things she knew.

MacIntyre saw what was coming. Philip was plunging; and his method, infallible on paper,

as the experience of twenty seasons proved, did not work quite perfectly in practice.

Mr. MacIntyre had seen this from the first. In the multitude of his experiences he had tried the martingale, new to Philip, even before that young gentleman was born. Like his pupil, he had been fascinated by it. The lever that was to raise him to wealth and power: so beautifully simple, so utterly impracticable.

He remonstrated with Philip, pointing out the rocks ahead. But he spoke to a deaf man.

"I know better. It's my cursed luck. I'm sure to warm the ring at ——," Philip urged. Then, with a shrug of the shoulders, he added, "And if my luck sticks to me, why—at the worst I shall pay up; and then Laura and I will go away somewhere, borrow money of Arthur, and become farmers in New Zealand, or keep a shop in Ballarat, or mock the hairy-faced baboon somewhere. We shall do. The world is wide."

"It is, Phil. I have found it so. The world is wide. And hungry."

Mr. MacIntyre took the book again, and totted up the amount that Philip had lost at his last meeting. Then he made a little note of it on a slip of paper, and put it into his pocket.

"Phil," he said, with an insinuating air, "I hope you have not lost much since you came home."

He changed colour.

"I've dropped more than four hundred at the club, and a hundred and fifty one night here, when I had those fellows to play loo; besides that pill at the last meeting."

Mr. MacIntyre shook his head. When he went home he made a little sum in arithmetic.

"When I consider," he said to himself, "that in *a—b*, *b* is greater than *a*, I'm afraid that Phil is likely to be up a tree, and my great card may very likely be played to advantage."

He went up to dine, a few nights after this talk. Laura was charming, in a fresh, bright dress, and in better spirits than usual. Philip, in one thing, had been disappointed in his wife. He had promised himself the trouble of teaching her the little courtesies of life—the ordinary accomplishments, perhaps her mother tongue. He never made a greater mistake. She came to him a lady ready to his hand: in all points an accomplished, refined, well-educated lady; how far superior to the ordinary run of young ladyhood he hardly knew.

The little dinner went off pleasantly, and when Laura left them in the little dining-room both men were pleased. She sat down in the drawing-room, and played while they talked over their wine. She played on till the clock struck ten;

then she waited till eleven; then she opened the door timidly, and looked in. Philip, flushed in the face, was making calculations on paper. Mr. MacIntyre, with face very much more flushed, had a long clay pipe in his mouth, not lighted, at which he was solemnly sucking.

"By Jove!" said Phil, "I thought I was a bachelor again. Come in, Laura—come in."

MacIntyre rose solemnly, holding by the table cover.

"The shoshiety of leddies is—what'sh wanted —ceevileeze the world. Ye will obsairve — at the 'vershety of which I am—member—Master of Arts—they always obsairved that the shoshiety of leddies—Phil, ye drunken deevil, whaur's my tumbler?"

Laura looked at him with amazement. The reverend gentleman was hopelessly drunk—as drunk as any stonemason in Puddock's-row. Port, followed by whisky toddy, had produced this lamentable effect.

"All right," said Phil. He was not drunk himself; but, as policemen say, he had been drinking. "All right, darling. Here, old bag of evil devices, put on your hat, and try to tie your legs in as many knots as you can on your way home."

"Shir," said the MacIntyre, putting the bowl

of the pipe into his mouth, "apologeeze. This is—this is—eh?—pershnal."

"To-morrow," said Phil. "Don't be frightened, Laura."

For his Reverence made a sudden lurch in her direction, inspired neither by animosity, nor yet by friendship, nor by any amorous inclination but solely by the toddy.

"I was shtudying—"

"Yes—yes—we know. Don't trouble yourself to say good night."

Philip pushed him downstairs, and out of the door, and returned.

"Oh, Phil, how could you?"

"Well, dear, he did it himself. I always let the MacIntyre have the full run of the bottle. So did my father."

"But he is a clergyman."

"My dear wife," her husband exclaimed, "*they all do it* in private life."

CHAPTER IX.

ABOUT the same time that Philip Dormer, Lord Chesterfield, was bringing the powers of his great mind to the alteration of Old Style into New Style, by making our English year begin on the first of January instead of the

twenty-fifth of March, and cheating the common people of eleven good days of the year of grace 1752, his right trusty and well-beloved friend, my Lord Bath, after spending ten days at Newmarket, delivered himself of a sentiment. His lordship was pleased to remark of his favourite sport that "it is delightful to see two, or sometimes more, of the most beautiful Animals of Creation struggling for superiority, stretching every muscle and sinew to obtain the prize and reach the goal; to observe the skill and address of the Riders, who are all distinguished by different colours of white, blue, green, red, or yellow, sometimes spurring or whipping, sometimes checking or pulling to give fresh breath and courage. And it is often observed that the Race is Won as much by the dexterity of the Rider as the vigour and fleetness of the Animal." The flourishing era of the English turf dates from the time of this memorable saying of Lord Bath's; and it is doubtful if the change in the calendar introduced by Lord Chesterfield has had one tithe of the effect upon manners and society that this new fashion set by Lord Bath of patronizing horse-races all over the country has been the means of bringing about.

It is still as delightful as it was in the days of the second Charles or the second George to

stand on that magnificent expanse, Newmarket Heath, and watch, from the rising ground at the top of the town, or from the A.F. winning-post, the struggles "of two or sometimes more of the most beautiful animals of creation," though the "skill and address of the riders" are not always turned to the account of making the "beautiful animals" they bestride stretch "every muscle and sinew to obtain the prize," as seems to have been the custom in the innocent days Lord Bath knew. Probably, in his lordship's time, Roping, as an art based on scientific deductions, had not been invented, though his description mentions "checking and pulling," but it is for the now obsolete custom of giving "fresh breath and courage." What the noble author would say if he saw a field of thirty horses facing the starter for a fifty pound Maiden Plate, T.Y.C. (A.F.), and his distinguishing colours "of white, blue, green, red, or yellow" complicated and modernized into "French gray, scarlet hoops and chevrons," or "black, white sleeves, Death's Head and crossbones," we do not care to speculate upon. In his time, honest races were run over four and six mile courses; a match was the favourite description of race; betting was not a profession; and the Scum did not invade the sacred precincts of the Duke of Rutland's

heath. A noble sport was in the hands of noble men.

Now—

Well, this is hardly my business.

"Obsairve," said Mr. MacIntyre, speaking to his pupil, Philip Durnford, above a hundred years later, "the fascination of this noble sport. You never knew a man in your life who had once tasted the delights of the turf who did not return to them again as soon as he had the means. There is something about it that no man can resist, break him as often as you like. If he has got the money to go racing and bet, he goes racing and bets. I knew a man who had three several fortunes, and lost them all gambling on the turf," Mr. MacIntyre proceeded to say; "and, Phil, ye'll obsairve that when he came into a fourth, he went and did likewise with that one also."

Like every idle young man with the command of cash, and the slightest possible amount of egging on, Philip Durnford was inclined to fiddle a bit at long odds. He had on some score or so of occasions taken a long shot, backed a tip or a fancy, before he had become the instrument in the hands of Providence of rescuing Mr. MacIntyre from his advertising agency. But he was not sweet upon the prac-

tice, for he had hardly ever won. It is notorious that, at all other sorts of gambling, a man invariably wins at first. This is not so in wagering upon horses; and Philip, with the common inclination to bet, and his full share of love for the sport, felt a little soured by his experience. Now, part of the universal scholarship of Mr. MacIntyre was an interest in horseflesh, a knowledge of betting, and an experience of races. Added to this, he was an infatuated believer in the well-known doubling martingale. Practising on the credulity and ignorance of Philip, he unfolded the secrets of this wonderful system of winning fabulous sums, as his—the MacIntyre's—whole and sole discovery and property. And he represented to that willing ear that if he only had the means of working it out, the Fuggers in the past, and the Rothschilds in the present, might be regarded as poor men compared with the ci-dévant pedagogue.

"Eh, my dear young friend, it's just the mighty lever that can make us meellionaires, an ye'll only believe it."

And there was evidence forthcoming to support the assertion. Racing calendars for twenty years were referred to; piles of paper scribbled over, and two or three lead pencils consumed

over these calculations. The system stood the test of all these years; generations of horses passed away as Phil and his mentor tested the lever's strength, and no run of luck was ill enough to break it. Philip believed in it—as, after such an array of evidence, who would not?—but he doubted MacIntyre.

"And do you mean to say you found this out yourself?" he often asked.

And without either blush or smile, the old vagabond declared that he was the great discoverer, and accordingly rolled a Newtonian and Copernican eye on Philip, and gave himself the airs of the Spaniard holding in his hand the key of the Incas' gold, or of Raleigh with El Dorado in full view.

1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512.

These figures were MacIntyre's ladder of fortune; and he offered boundless wealth to needy Philip Durnford, on the modest condition of "standing in." He had confided his great secret to him, and he trusted to his honour.

His pupil was convinced and fascinated. Could the favourite lose ten times in succession? MacIntyre said no. Could a tipster be out ten times running? MacIntyre said no. Could Philip's own selection be wrong ten times? MacIntyre said no. Could any mortal thing

happen ten times? Mr. MacIntyre's calculations were there to give it the lie.

So they worked away at the books, going carefully through the results of thousands of races. They applied their lever to betting on billiards, boats, guns, cards, dice—anything that a wager can be made about; and nothing could happen in the ordinary course of things to beat them.

Philip rejoiced, for he held power, and honours, and wealth in his hand. He was the lucky possessor of the certain method of making a colossal fortune. He could break the ring, the banks, the world of gamblers. He did not envy his richer brother now, nor any man. He only pined at the little delay that kept him from beginning. His broker was the slowest fellow in the world.

"The mighty lever that can make us millionaires"—he held it in his hand; and the fulcrum was the Newmarket July Meeting, two weeks hence. He began to spend his great wealth. He dreamed long day dreams. He was rich, famous, generous, too, to poor Arthur, with only three or four thousands to spend in good years. He made up the deficit in bad ones. Arthur was a brother, after all, and could draw on him for what he liked. Laura, his wife

—no princess of Russia had such jewels. His four-in-hand was the admiration of the park. His horses were always first. If they cost their weight in gold, what did it matter? He could pay it. He won the Derby. The most splendid Prince in Europe came into his box to drink champagne-cup with him, and congratulate him on his success. He bought vast estates—the envy of the envied—Mr. Durnford, the millionaire! He had his troubles, too. He distressed himself when he had bought all the land in the market—in parcels large enough to be worth having. He had to devise schemes for keeping his secret from the ring, or betting would be over. He could not get on all the money he wanted. His friends quarrelled about his wealth. People watched him in the ring—followed his lead—mobbed him.

Châteaux in Spain, and castles in the air beyond all power of description, he built on MacIntyre's ingenious multiplication table.

But in all his unbounded belief in the doubling martingale there lurked a doubt. He never could credit Mr. MacIntyre's statement that he was the inventor, though that canny gentleman stuck to his lie with characteristic hardihood. If he had been disposed to tell the truth, he might have mentioned that he got it

from a groom at Melbourne, who in turn had got it from a little shilling "Guide to the Winning Post," which had been read no doubt by hundreds of people who had a shilling to lay out. The author of the pamphlet, again, was indebted to somebody before him; and so on ad infinitum. But the curious part of it was that all these persons claimed the invention of the system of doubling, and imparted their information as something of a very secret and confidential nature. In this way, Philip Durnford received it from Mr. MacIntyre. He gave a solemn promise not to tell it to anybody, but to go to work as speedily as possible to make his own and his mentor's fortune.

MacIntyre had received the precious talisman as a secret. He believed that few people knew of it, that those who did must grow rich by working this most productive vein. He honestly believed in his system, and gave it to Philip as a chart to guide him over the shoals and quicksands in the sea of turf enterprise to the land of gold on the other side. He had carefully worked out—always on paper, though—every known method of winning money by gambling, he had seen generations of backers and bettors go, from a late noble marquis with a capital of a quarter of a million, to "Ready-money Riley" and his

lucky five-pound note. Before Mr. MacIntyre's eyes all had gone the same way. It was only a question of time. Their ruin the philosopher attributed to want of system; and among all the systems, his own was the best. He had waded through all the "Racing Calendars" from 1773 to date, had applied his system to every race for a period of ninety odd years, and on paper he had never broken down, and was the winner of many millions. He showed his figures to Philip, and completely satisfied him. But Philip, being a genius, went to work to improve it; and he tried, on paper, all sorts of little modifications of his secret method of breaking the ring. Not to go into petty details, he broke the ring in half a dozen different ways, and became Crœsus six times over. The leaves of his pocket-books were scribbled over with a thousand repetitions and combinations of the same series of figures; and he argued with himself that he was not going to gamble—it was merely speculation.

"The mathemateecian, De Morgan," said Mr. MacIntyre, "remarks that a gambler ceases to be such when he makes his stakes bear a proportion to his capital, and takes no hazards that are unduly against him."

And Philip Durnford's capital left him a large

reserve, over and above his working money, for contingencies that might arise. So he started with a light heart on his course of speculation. For a few days all went well. A fortnight brought a change, and showed him that paper and practice are two mightily different things, and that his system could not be worked out, if he had had the pluck to do it. Half his money was gone in following his system. The other half was punted away in indiscriminate wagering on any tip that might turn up trumps.

CHAPTER X.

CHACUN à son secret. Philip had his, and he kept it well. Every young fool who airs his inexperience on the turf—and, for that matter, every old one—has his own way of breaking the ring. How many of these ingenious devices are the same, fate knows and bookmakers may guess perhaps. The infatuated themselves guard their secrets more closely than their honour; and the system, method, modus, martingale—call the thing by what name you will—is never spoken of by the lucky possessors. They are careful over each operation, for fear some inkling of their royal road to fortune should be discovered; jealous, lest on turning over the leaves of their books some eye, looking over their shoulder, should see their game. Once out, they think, the mischief is done.

Everybody will do as they do; winning will be a certainty; and in a trice there will be no ring for them to break. The motive is selfish, but easily understood; for is not the world we live in selfish, and the least disinterested corner of it a betting-ring? Granted a system that makes winning certain, and that it is generally known, and there is the end of betting; and with it your own particular chance of becoming richer than the Rothschilds. No wonder, then, that when you have the magic talisman in your pocket you keep it there, jealously buttoned up. That thousands of men have carried such a talisman for turning all they touched to gold, that thousands of men have reduced winning on the turf to a certainty—on paper—are matters of common knowledge. That theory is one thing and practice another—in a word, that the systems do not work to the satisfaction of the owners, it is sufficient to call attention to the fact that there are as few Rothschilds among us as of old; or to the pockets of the greasy ring-men, still stuffed as full as ever with Bank of England notes. The common fate of methods based on paper calculations had befallen the martingale which Mr. Philip Durnford had hugged to his heart for half a season. Owing its existence, as Philip believed, to the original intellect of Mr. MacIntyre, modi-

fied and perfected by his own hand, he felt as certain of the great results to be obtained from working it out as he did that the Bank would change its notes for gold on demand. With his hat jauntily set on his head, a flower in his coat, and the blue satin note case Laura had quilted for him with her fair fingers in his pocket, crammed with bank notes, he had paid his guinea, and plunged proudly and defiantly into the Babel of the ring at the Newmarket July.

Here he was, at the beginning of November, driving down to Kingdon races in a Hansom: alone with his thoughts, which were far from pleasant, with his betting-book to remind him of past mistakes and misfortunes, and all the money he had in the world in the inside pocket of his waistcoat—that pocket which was to be found in all his waistcoats, secret and secure, in which he had meant to carry away the spoils he wrested from the ring.

Down on his luck, and as nearly desperate as a gambler can be who has one throw left, there was this chance for him still—the two hundred pounds he had about him: one month of racing. In that month, with luck, he might turn the two hundred into thousands. Without luck—well, it hardly mattered.

The method had long since been cast aside.

He made his bets now without reference to it. He had followed the phantom Chance through seven losing weeks. They had ruined him. There is nothing demoralizes the gambler like a long tide of ill-luck. His judgment leaves him. He can no longer thread the mazes of public form, or make clever guesses at the effect of weights in handicaps. He makes this wager and that, for no reason but that a feather turns the scale. In his mind, the strongest reason why a horse should lose is that it carries his money. He never backs the right tip; and the only consolation he has is to quarrel with luck, and call it hard names. These had been Philip Durnford's experiences of the "glorious uncertainty of the turf" for seven miserable weeks of the worst season for backers the oldest turfite could remember. Undreamt-of outsiders were always coming in first, till the very ring-men avowed that they were tired of winning. The slaughter had been great, and complaints of default were loud and deep. Doncaster had punished some, the first and second weeks at Newmarket had settled others. This noble lord's and that honourable gentleman's accounts were absent from Tattersall's on settling-day. Backers could not stand against such luck, it was said in excuse. There was a pretty general stampede for the

Levant among the shaky division. But Philip's little account had always been forthcoming till after the Newmarket Houghton. He had taken his shovel, and dug away manfully at his little heap of sovereigns, and paid his debts every week to time; but that last week in Cambridgeshire was a facer. It had settled him. When he added up his book after the first day of the meeting, he knew he had wagered and lost more than he could pay if he sold the coat off his back. Then he smiled the bitter smile of defeat, and, in the language of the sport, "went for the gloves"—that is, he had five days' good hard gambling, well knowing that if the result of the week's work was against him he could not settle. So, being desperate, he was foolish, and betted in amounts three times heavier than he was in the habit of doing.

"Ma boy, take ma word, the captain'sh going for the glovesh," said a discreet Hebrew, placing his dirty jewelled paw on the shoulder of another of his tribe. "I don't bet no more with him. I'm full agen anythink at all."

"Vy, Nathan, vy? Misther Vilkins settled for him all right last veek."

"I'll tell you vy, Jacob, ma boy. Ven I see a young feller as alvays used to be satisfied vith havin' a pony or fifty on the favourite for a

sellin' race a bettin' in hunderds all of a sudding, I know vat it means. Look, there's Nosey Smith a layin' him two centuries agen Bella. Not for me, that's all. Mark me, now, he'll go. And nobody knows nothink about him. I've looked in the peerage: there isn't no Durnford in it as I can find. They'll book anythink to anybody now, bless me if they von't! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Who'll back anythink? Any pricesh agen [some o' these runners! Full, Captain Durnford, sir, agen all the fav'rits."

For Philip had not done with Bella yet, and asked her price of Mr. Nathan Morris, diamond merchant, of Bishopsgate-street Without, money lender and leg in any part of the world he might happen to be in.

And Mr. Morris was right. Philip was betting all to nothing, for if he lost he would not pay; and he laughed as he pencilled down the name of Bella till two openings of his book were filled with it. Then there was the fun of watching the race, and seeing Bella struggle past the post.

"Of course," thought Philip; "beaten by a head just on the post, by what I always thought was the worst animal in training."

Then he rode off to while away a few minutes with luncheon—partridge pie, washed down with

champagne—coming into the ring again with a smile on his face, and filling more pages of his book with the name of another loser.

He had no money, but he had credit; and credit is a very wonderful thing. It is the only substitute for wealth. To borrow a quotation from Defoe—"Credit makes the soldier fight without pay, the armies march without provisions, and it makes the tradesman keep open shop without stock. The force of credit is not to be described by words. It is an impregnable fortification either for a nation or for a single man in business, and he that has credit is invulnerable, whether he has money or no." And there is nowhere in the world where credit will do more, or where there is more of it to be had, than in the betting ring. It enabled Philip to "keep open shop without goods" till the next settling day.

That day came, and Mr. Durnford's account was absent from the clubs. His name was mentioned pretty often in the course of that Monday afternoon. He was wanted very badly. Then people began to wonder who he was, what he was, why they had booked bets to him. Well they might wonder. This tendency to trust every man who has paid ready money with his bets for one month at most is one of the

most remarkable things about the professional layer. Very often he does not know the address of his debtor, or even that the name he bets in is the one he commonly makes use of. The layer must pay every week, or his living is gone. The profession is propped up by this solitary kind of honesty. The bookmaker always pays; but the backer may retire at any moment, as Philip did after going for his gloves without getting them.

The ring-men used some very bad language when the next Monday after his default came, and there was no news of him. Nobody had seen him "about" that week either. One little man had drawn a fiver of him in the street, having met him casually in Chancery-lane. This speculator took a hopeful view of things, and thought all would be right. You see, he was out of the mire. The others swore, and said they should be careful in future whom they trusted, &c.; but they had often said so before, and it only wanted a young adventurer to pay up regularly for three or four weeks, to be able to do with them exactly what Philip Durnford had done.

When the fatal week was over, and he came to reckon up the cost of his recklessness, he wished he had never done it. But it was too

late. He was neither more nor less than a welsher. So men would say, he knew. And he had still left some of the feelings of a man of honour. So, for a day or two, he shut himself up at home—moody, very irritable, and very wretched, but safe. He blessed his stars that only one of the pack of ravening wolves knew his private address. If he had had the means he would have paid that man, under promise that he would not tell his whereabouts to the rest.

When, after a day or two had passed, he ventured out, he expected every moment to be stopped, or to meet some emissary from the ring—to be insulted, jeered, hooted at, as a thief and a welsher. But he was safe enough: the ring-men were plying their busy trade a hundred miles from where he stood. So he got over his fear, and showed his face pretty much as of old. Then came the chance of retrieving all. Kingdon clashed with a popular Midland meeting. Not three of the bigger men who wanted him would be there. He would go; but keep out of the ring, and bet in ready money. They could not stop him from doing that; and he had been very lucky at Kingdon in the summer.

His Hansom drove along the muddy road at

a good speed, for he had covenanted to pay the driver "racing price" for the day's job. They passed the last straggling rows of suburban houses and got into the open country of the "way down Harrow-way," halting at all the recognized hostelries on the road. "Half-way houses" the driver called them, where he could just rinse the horse's mouth, and—what was equally necessary—his own. Philip drew his Dutch courage from a private fountain of inspiration in his breast pocket. An unpleasant fear of recognition kept him in his seat; but the honest cabman spent his fare's small silver for the good of the house at every port they put in at. And it is almost superfluous to add they touched at all they passed, or that to the sturdy sons of Britain this is more than half the pleasure of a day in the country. As Philip furtively peeped out through the oval side windows of his cab, he saw nothing to alarm him. He was recognized, too, by a few friends, and by some of the small fry of the professionals. These people, it was plain, had not heard of his little mishap. It gave him courage to go into the ring when he got to the course. He paid his six shillings at the gate, not with the air of the expatriated wretch he was, but more like his former self—the loving patron of a noble sport. He was

early in the field. The ring was thin. He mounted the wooden steps of the Grand Stand, and hid himself safely away in the farthest corner of the top shelf. From this eminence he watched and waited—drank in the undulating landscape with his gaze, or scanned the faces of the ring below through his glass. The clearing bell sounded; the numbers of the runners were hoisted on the board—he ticked them off on his card; the riders' names were added to the numbers; the saddling bell rang; the horses streamed out of the enclosure; the roar of the odds began in the ring down below. He pricked his ears, as the war-horse at the smell of powder, or the veteran hunter at the tongue of hounds, and forgot his luck as he strained his ear to catch, in the roar of the Babel, a notion of what it was they were making favourite, and how the market was going.

"How do they bet?" he asked, as one after another pushed up the steps to where he stood.

He was satisfied the worst favourite could win at the weights, if it was only trying. To assure himself of this, he edged and dodged his way through the ring out to the lists. Not a hungry creditor to be seen: only the small scoundrels who infest the metropolitan gatherings were assisting at Kingdon. The big rascals were

away, a hundred and twenty miles off, in the Midlands.

He had begun to feel safe, and confident in his judgment, when he saw some well-known sharps putting down the money in small sums at the lists on his own selection.

"She'll win," he said, with an excited chuckle, as he pressed forward in the crowd with as springy a step as the mud round the boxes permitted.

"Good goods—the old mare is," he heard an ex-champion of England whisper in the ear of a sporting publican.

"Going straight?" inquired the confidant, putting his dirty hand before his greasy mouth. "Party got the pieces on?"

"Hold yer jaw. 'Er 'ead's loose—that's enough for you; be quick and back her, before it's blown on."

Philip profited by what he had overheard, rushed to the nearest list, wrenched a crumpled fiver from his inside pocket, and reached up to the man in the box.

"Corinthian Sal!"

The fist of the burly ruffian seized his note, squeezed it up and shoved it into his bag, calling to his clerk behind—

"Fifty to five—Corinthian Sal."

"Right!"

"Here's your ticket."

Philip took it, and in trying to get away from the list-man's stand he was met by a hurrying crowd. There was a rush from the ring to back the good thing, outside. But the men who wanted to do it were well known. In an instant the pencil was run through the "10" before the name of Corinthian Sal on all the lists in the gambling thoroughfare.

In vain the excited regiment from the ring plunged through the mud and mire, proffering their money to the list-keepers. They were answered everywhere, "Done with." The secret was out. The little Selling Plate was squared for the seven-year-old daughter of Corinthian Tom.

"Another ramp! And I've just laid fifty to five agen her," groaned the man Philip had bet with.

"Aint they hot on these selling races?"

"He's a hot member as I've laid it to. These swells don't come outside unless they know something."

When Philip managed to get back to his old stand, he met with a friend or two who wanted to hear "what he had done," and whether he "knew anything;" and he had the pleasure of

telling them he was "in the know," appearing to be much wiser than he really was, and letting them think he had backed the mare for a good stake.

When he saw her canter past the post, hands down, an easy winner, he inwardly cursed his luck at having won when, comparatively speaking, he had "nothing on."

"Just my luck," he said, as he pocketed the fifty-five pounds he had drawn; "but let us hope it has taken a turn."

He patronized the refreshment booth, drinking some champagne with his friends; and then turned his attention to the next event, reduced to a match, as only two of the seven horses entered came to the post. The talent were some time in making a favourite. It was even betting between the two weedy screws that cantered down to the starting-post. Philip, thinking it prudent to keep for the present out of the ring, for fear of any little contretemps that might arise from meeting somebody who wanted him, went out to the lists, and at last betted the fifty pounds he had won, in several small bets, posting the money. He backed the favourite, laying fifty to forty on it—and lost.

Is it necessary that I should ask my reader to follow the fortunes of Philip through the two

days' racing at Kingdon? To him who is initiated in the mysteries of the turf my narrative will be intelligible, but probably uninteresting, for it is a tale he knows by heart. To the uninitiated this chapter must be to a great extent unintelligible, therefore uninteresting. But the exigencies of my history—as will be seen from what is to follow—seem to demand that I should give a brief outline of Philip Durnford's doings on this last appearance of his in the charmed circle devoted to the interests of dishonesty and dirt. Apologizing, let me comply with the necessity, offering only, as some sort of excuse, the plea that I draw from the life.

After losing the fifty pounds he had won, Philip had still his little capital in his pocket intact. Three succeeding races relieved him of three-fourths of it.

"What forsaken luck!" he laughed, bitterly, being desperate. "Fifty left! One more flutter, I suppose, and then——"

"Hallo, old Durnford!" a friendly voice sounded in his ear. "Well, how are they using you, old man—eh? I have just landed again."

"I should say I had the devil's own luck," replied Philip, "except for the curious fact that fellows say that indiscriminately of the best luck and the worst."

"Well, we'll say you have the devil's worst luck, then."

They chatted till the numbers of the next race were run up.

"The good thing of the day," cried Philip's friend. "I know three or four of the clever division that have come down on purpose to back this. It was backed down to level money this morning in town."

"We shall get no price about it," said Philip.

"I'll see what they offer. Shall I do anything for you?"

Philip hesitated—only for a moment.

"Yes."

"I'm going to put the money down upon it, I can tell you."

"Put on a century for me."

Then he stole out to the lists and emptied his pockets. The odds he took against Triumpher were six to four. With the hundred his friend had put on by this time, he stood to win nearly two hundred pounds. With a beating heart he made for his place of vantage on the top of the wooden steps. As he ran in at the ring-gate he was stopped by a man who had often seen him bet, but with whom he had had no dealings before.

"What do you want to do, Captain Durn-

ford? Let me have a bet with you this time—come."

"Triumpher?" said Philip, raising his eyebrows in a careless way, and chewing the end of his pencil.

"Fifty to forty, sir."

"No." And he made a move to go on, feeling sure the odds would be extended.

"Sixty to forty, sir?"

"Not good enough."

"Here, I won't be be't by you," cried another ring-man. "I'll lay the gentleman eighty-five to seventy."

"All right," said Philip.

"Twice, sir?"

"Twice."

As he asked the man's name and wrote it down in his book, there was a general hoarse laugh among the bookmakers, for they saw intuitively what he had failed to see—namely, that he had refused six to four and taken a fraction over four to three and a half. But the laugh, when Philip had left them, was turned in quite the opposite direction, when an acquaintance called out to the man who had done the clever trick—

"So help me, you've gone and done it, you have!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the layer.

"The Cap'n aint paid for a fortni't. Now!"

The "Ha, ha!" now became "Oh-h, oh-h!"

"I'll off the bet. Where is he?"

But Philip had altered his mind, and was gone right away across the running track to the other side, opposite the stand. He was sitting out—dangling his legs over the white railing, and looking at his muddy boots. Oh, the exquisite pleasure of seeing the flag drop—the runners go down into the dip—come sweeping up the hill!

Ruined or made! His heart sank.

"Curse the boy! why does he not bring the horse out of the ruck? He's shut in."

Hope at zero. Ruined.

"No, by Jove, he's got him out! He's done it! Hur-ray-y-y!"

Up went his hat, high in the air.

"Triumpher!"

Yes, the judge sends up "No. 21," and Phil drove home nearly happy, with a mind full of resolutions to win on the morrow.

Wednesday morning broke in happy uncertainty as to whether to be wet or fine. But by twelve o'clock in the day the rain fell fast. But nothing short of the crack of doom—hard frost excepted—will stop a race-meeting. All the

difference the weather apparently made to Philip was that, instead of spending two sovereigns in going down by road, he spent two shillings in going to Kingdon by rail. Wrapped in his mackintosh from head to foot, he felt in better heart than on the day before, and all went on well till he was recognized on the road and insulted by one of his forty-seven creditors for debts of honour.

"Well, what will *you* do?" asked Philip, angrily.

"You show your face in the ring, and you'll see what I'll do. Call yourself a gentleman—I call you a welsher."

He shouted the last word, and as there were a lot of people about Philip rushed for a fly, and swore at the man for not driving on in a moment. He did not pay for admission to the ring. He knew the man would keep his word, so he played the undignified part of an outsider, and was, besides, in constant dread of being hooted by his enemy. There is no charge easier to bring, or more difficult to rebut, than the charge of "welshing" on a racecourse, and the mob has a nasty habit of hunting the victim half-naked into the nearest pond, and hearing the evidence some other day. This unpleasant practice made the young man careful whom

he met. Altogether things were unpleasant. There were seven races on the wet card. They were run in a pouring rain. There was no trusting to form, for the horses could not act in the wet, and all calculations were upset. Of the first four races on the card, Philip won two and lost two. Then he sat out and looked on once without a bet—sad, weary, and dripping.

On his fancy for the last two races he staked all the money he had in the world—and lost it.

"Well, old fellow," said an acquaintance whom he met on the platform at King's Cross, seizing him by the shoulders and giving him a friendly shake, "if you've been backing horses in red mud you've come off a winner and no mistake—you've got plenty of it sticking about you. What a day it has been!"

Philip muttered "Damnable," in an undertone, and getting into a cab directed the man to drive him home. As they left the station yard, he put his hand into his pocket and pulled out the only coins he had left. They were just enough to pay his fare.

CHAPTER XI.

SOME of my readers—I am writing for both worlds—have very likely been hanged. They will remember that on the morning of the day for which this unpleasant operation—surrounded by everything most likely to increase the unavoidable

discomfort—was fixed, they slept sweetly and soundly, awaking early in the morning with dreams of childhood's innocence. This was the case with Philip on the morning after all this disaster had fallen upon him. He awoke at twelve from a dream of perfect peace and happiness—awoke smiling and at rest. Suddenly, the thought of all his misery fell upon him, and he started up, wide awake and wretched. He could not lie any longer, but got up, dressing hurriedly and nervously All, everything, gone: more than all. Dishonour before him and ruin already upon him. In this evil plight, what to do? He thought of Arthur; but he could not bear to go and tell him, his younger brother, the story of his ruin. And then he looked back, and saw with what fatal folly he had gone deeper and deeper, hoping against hope, living in the fool's paradise of a gambler.

He went downstairs, and found Laura, fresh and bright, reading quietly in the window. She looked up, rang the bell, and sat down again. No word of welcome for him, none of reproach; for, as her husband grew colder, the young wife retreated more and more within herself. Laura's face has changed in the last three months. The old look has passed away, and another has taken its place. It is a sad expression, an expression

of thought and reflection, that sits upon her face. She has found out her great and terrible fault. Between herself and Philip there is nothing in common; and she trembles, thinking of the future that lies before, and a life spent as these last three months have been. For she has no friends, no visitors, no acquaintance. No one but Philip and Mr. MacIntyre ever speaks to her. She is alone in the world. And yet she knows, in her heart, that there is one friend to whom she may go, with whom she will find forgiveness. Of that she is certain. Philip's breakfast was brought up. He sat down, exasperated with himself, with his wife because she took no notice of him, with everything. He poured out a cup of tea, and looked at it. Then he broke into a fit of irrepressible wrath.

"Damn it all," he said, "the tea is cold."

His wife looked at him in surprise. It was the first time he had ever lost his temper before her.

"Philip! Why, it is just made."

To prove his words, he tasted it, and scalded his lips. Then he pushed the tray back, swearing again. Laura watched him with astonishment.

"I will have no tea and trash. Give me some brandy."

"Not in the morning. Philip, you are very strange. Are you ill?"

He went to the cellaret and helped himself, saying nothing.

Just then the maid came, bearing a small blue paper—a missive from the butcher.

"Philip, give me four pounds, please. The man wants his money."

"I have no money."

"Mary, tell the butcher to call again to-morrow," Laura said, flushing with shame. "What is the meaning of this, Philip?"

"Nothing. If there were, you would not care—you would not understand. Do you care anything at all for what concerns me? Have you ever cared?"

"At least, I may know if it is anything in which I can help."

"You cannot help. You can only make things worse. If you loved me, you might. But, there, what is the use of talking?"

She was looking quite coldly in his face. Love?—of course she had never loved him. But why—why did not conscience, who so often slumbers when she ought to be awake and at work—why did not conscience remind him then, even then, of all the girl had given to him, and all of which he had robbed her? He might

have remembered her sweet and innocent trust; the confidence which came from perfect purity of soul; the nights when he had awakened, her head upon his breast, his arms round her neck, to listen to her sweet breath rise and fall, to catch the murmur of her dreams; and, for very shame's sake, he might have thought of the friend from whom he had torn her—the disgraceful lies and deceits with which he had surrounded her. But he thought of none of these things. He thought only that, at all risks and hazards, this at least must be put an end to.

"What is it, Philip?" she asked, with frightened eyes.

"I have been thinking," he said, looking on the carpet, and lighting a cigar with trembling fingers, "for some time, that we should come to an understanding."

"What about?"

"About everything—our marriage especially."

I believe that when he got up that morning nothing was farther from his thoughts than this villainy. But a drowning man catches at a straw; and the ruined man saw that by getting rid of Laura he should at least be free to act. The power of impecuniosity to make men do vile and abominable things has never been properly stated by poet or novelist. In the Lord's Prayer,

after the petitions for bread and forgiveness, comes the equally important one that we may not be led into temptation — amongst other things, by an empty purse.

Laura suspected nothing, understood nothing.

"I told you two months ago, Laura, that perhaps you might, some time or other, make another attempt to recover Mr. Venn's friendship. I think the time has come."

"I may write to him, Philip? You mean it? —you really mean it?"

"I think I would not write to him, if I were you, because you might mislead him on one or two important points. I think you had better go and see him."

"Mislead him? How am I to mislead him?"

He looked up and met the clear, deep eyes of his wife, and his own fell. His voice grew husky.

"When you met me—that is, when I took you to the lodgings of the man in Keppel-street—"

"Where we were married?"

"Where, Laura—there is no use hiding things any longer—where the man pretended to marry us."

She looked full at him, unable to take in, all at once, the whole force of his words.

Philip, the fatal shot once fired, felt emboldened to proceed. But he was very pale.

"MacIntyre was not a properly qualified clergyman. He had no power to marry us. He says he is a clergyman of the Scotch Church. If that is any consolation to you, believe it. The man is an accomplished liar; but he may sometimes speak the truth. We are no more married, Laura, than if we had never met."

"You knew this all along, Mr. Durnford?"

"All along. I should have married you regularly, because I was so infatuated with your beauty; but you insisted on being married on that particular Wednesday or no other. It was not altogether my fault. I thought perhaps—"

"Yes," said Laura, sitting down.

Neither spoke for a space. The cigar went out between Philip's lips, and these trembled and shook. His face was white, with a look of terror: a man might have it when he suddenly realizes that all the nobleness has gone out of him.

Presently, he moved forward a step. She started back, crying—

"Don't touch me—don't come near me!"

"Laura, in spite of your coldness—though you have never loved me as I once loved you—I should have kept this secret, but for one thing.

I am utterly ruined. I not only have no money, but I owe hundreds of pounds more than I can pay, and I shall be a dishonoured man. I must leave the country if I cannot raise the money. We must part."

"Yes," said the girl, "we must part. Why did we ever meet? By what cruel mockery of fate did you ever cross my path? Part! Man, if you were to touch me, if I were to feel your breath upon me, I should die. You, who for five months have lived with this shameful lie upon your conscience—you who called yoursel gentleman—you who mocked at the poor man's sins and sufferings—you! Is every gentleman like this?"

He did not answer, looking down upon the hearth-rug. There were, then, some remains of shame upon him.

Laura poured out a glass of water and drank it. Then she took off her wedding ring, kissed it, and laid it gently on the table.

"Holy symbol," she said, "I must not wear you any longer. Why did you find me out to ruin me, Mr. Philip Durnford? Are there not enough poor women crying in the world, but you must bring sorrow and shame to another? And —and—oh, God! is heaven so full that there is no room in it for me?"

Then she turned upon him like a tigress, so that he shrank back and cowered.

"You, for whom I prayed night and morning. You, that I thought all nobleness and honour; so that I laid bare all the secrets of my soul to you, and told everything that was in my heart! I am ashamed when I think that I have so talked with you. I am more ashamed of this than of anything. And, oh! what will Mr. Venn say when I go back to him, and tell him all the shameful story? How shall I tell it him —how shall I tell it him? Philip Durnford, keep out of his way, and tell that other man, your accomplice, to keep out of his way and hide himself, or it may be worse for him. I don't want any punishment to fall on you—except, I suppose, God does sometimes make wicked people feel their wickedness. But nothing can make their victims again as they have been. When your turn comes, Philip, when you go from bad to worse—when you find yourself at last upon your death-bed, with *this* behind you, you will think of me—you will think of me."

Philip was a little recovered by this time.

"Of course," he said, lightly, "I expected a little unpleasantness at first. You will see, when we get older, that I could not act otherwise."

"As a *gentleman*—no."

"I will not be irritated," he went on, being now as calm as if he were doing a virtuous action —"I will not be irritated. The sale of this furniture——"

"Thank you—you are thoughtful."

Then she left him, and went to her own room, where she locked the door and threw herself upon the bed.

Philip, left alone, wiped his forehead and breathed more freely. One source of expense was gone, at any rate. There was comfort in that thought—a ray of sunshine in the tempest of his mind. As for what might be said or thought of him, he was profoundly indifferent. Only it occurred to him that the news might have been broken in a different manner, less abruptly, through a third person, by letter. However, it was done, and nothing could undo it. Misfortune to some men is a kind of Ithuriel's spear: it reveals the real nature of a man—

> "No falsehood can endure
> Touch of celestial temper, but returns
> Of force to his own likeness."

Then the brave man becomes a coward, the large-hearted man mean, the godly man ungodly, the virtuous man vicious, the noble a lache. The women of the family generally have

the best opportunities of finding out the truth; but they cover it up, hide it, and go about flaunting their colours of loyalty to the great and good man whom all the world admires; and, after the first agony of shame, fall into that cynicism which sits so ill on woman's nature. As for the men, I think their thoughts may arrange themselves in the form of a Collect, a prayer for every morning of the year, as thus: "Lord, the helper of sinners as well as of saints, let not the smugness of our reputation ever decrease; but replenish us, above all things, with the bulwarks of wealth and honour, so that the virtues with which we are credited may never be called into exercise." And there are some—Philip Durnford was one—who deliberately believe themselves to be chivalrous, delicately honourable, brave, manly, and great; though all the time every thought and every action might go to prove the contrary. The mirror in which men see themselves—what we call conscience—is distorted; and while the real man performs duties and absurdities in folly and sin, the mirror shows another Sir Galahad, marching, with lofty crest, along the narrow path of honour, while in the sunshine glow the battlements which guard the Holy Grail.

Such was Philip in his mirror. All of a sud-

den, when Laura left him, there was an instant flash of lightning in his soul which showed him a thing he was never to forget, the real creature he was. No Sir Galahad, but a mopping and mowing antic, crawling ignobly down the slope of Avernus. He started to his feet, and stood for a moment staring into space. Then he seized the brandy bottle, and drank a wine-glassful; and behold, Sir Galahad again!—only with a sort of blurr and haze around his noble form, evermore to grow more blurred as the memory of this guilt eats into his soul. Perhaps this illusory image will some day be wholly gone, and his real self be seen with clearer eyes. Then may he cry aloud to be delivered from the body of this death, and God's punishment be upon him—the punishment of forgiveness. Is there no punishment in repentance and self-abasement? Cannot revenge itself be satisfied when the sinner is prostrate, crying, from shame and remorse, "Lord, I have sinned—I have sinned"?

Laura, in her bed-room, sat silent for a while, trying to think. Then she fell upon her knees and tried to pray; but no words came. Only as she knelt a thought came across her soul, which was, perhaps, the answer to her prayer. For she arose swiftly, and began to

undress herself. Everything she had on she tore off and threw from her, as if it had been a shirt of Nessus. Her earrings, her jewels, the cross round her neck, she laid on the table; and put with them her watch and chain, all her little trinkets—all but a single little cross with a black ribbon, which she laid aside, for Mr. Venn had given it to her. And then she opened all her drawers, took out the contents—the trousseau that Philip had given her—piled them all in a heap, and trampled on them with her bare little feet. And then, out of the lowest division, she took the dress she had worn when she was married: all that she had on that day was lying folded together, even to the stockings and the little boots. She put them on hurriedly: the dress of blue merino stuff; the little hat with an ostrich feather, Mr. Venn's last gift; the ivory cross and the locket he had given her, the brown cloth jacket, the belt with the great steel buckle, and the new pair of gloves—the last she had received from him. In the pocket of her dress was her purse, and in it two pounds —Mr. Venn's two pounds.

Then she took her jewel-case, placed in it all the things that Philip had given her, and descended the stairs. He was sitting there, just as she had left him half an hour before: her hand-

some husband, her knight, and lord, and king. He for whom she had left the noblest of friends, to cleave to him. All the nobleness was gone out of his face. As she looked on him, she wondered where it had been; and she pitied him —yes, she pitied him—for his baseness.

He looked up, and made a motion with his lips as if he would speak; but no words came. She placed the jewel-case on the table gently.

"You will find my dresses upstairs, Mr. Durnford. You can sell them for something, I dare say. I am come to return you your other presents. There is the watch you gave me at Vieuxcamp, with a pretty speech about its lasting as long as your love—you remember it, I dare say. Here is the chain. You said that love's fetters were all golden. It was a very pretty thing to say, was it not? Here are the bracelets, and all the rest. They will do for your next victim.

"After the next mock marriage, try to undeceive the victim a little less suddenly and harshly. Let her know it in some way a little different to this.

"I wish you had died first, Philip. I wish you were lying dead at my feet, and that I were crying over your dead body, believing you to be

good and true. Now there is nothing to lament. But how much worse for both of us! The last memory I shall carry away with me is of a coward and a liar. A gentleman! Look in the glass, at your own face."

It was now, though she did not know this, the face of a negro, with protruding lips, lowering eyebrows, and black cheeks.

"Have you more to say?" asked Philip, hoarsely.

"I go as I came," she said. "Whatever I brought with me I take away, but nothing more. Stay, this is my own penknife."

She took a little white-handled thing from the inkstand, and put it into her pocket. It was the slightest action in the world, but it wrung Philip's heart as nothing yet had wrung it.

"Now there is nothing left to remind you of me," she said. "Mr. Venn will help me. I go back to him."

He did not speak.

"Farewell, Philip."

She turned to go. As she touched the handle of the door, her husband fell forward on his knees before her, and caught her by the hand, with tears and sobs.

"Laura, Laura!" he cried, "forgive me. All shall be as it was. We will be married again.

Forgive me, Laura. I am mad this morning. Only stay——"

But she slipped from him, and was gone.

After all, the memory of her husband was not altogether that of the hardened wretch she might have thought him.

CHAPTER XII.

ABOUT two o'clock Mr. MacIntyre called upon his patron, and found him in a state of mental irritation which indicated the necessity of prudence and tact. He was sitting where Laura had left him, glowering over the fire—her bracelets and trinkets on the table; and the black cloud upon his face, with this disorder, was quite sufficient to teach the student of human nature that something had happened. A curious phrase this—if we may be allowed a digression. It surely indicates a strong belief in the malignity of fate, when the phrase, "something has happened," means misfortune; as if nothing was ever given unexpectedly except kicks and buffets. So far as my own experience goes, the voice of the people is right.

Mr. MacIntyre assumed an expression designed to illustrate the profound sympathy working in his breast, took off his hat, and sat down in silence.

"What's the matter, Phil?" After a pause.

Philip made an impatient gesture.

"Mrs. Durnford——"

"Damnation!" cried Philip, starting to his feet, and walking backwards and forwards.

Mr. MacIntyre was silent. Presently, preserving the same sympathetic look, he rose, and moving softly—after the manner of one who respects trouble—he proceeded to the well-known cellaret, whence he drew a decanter of sherry. Helping himself to a glass, he drank it off with a deep sigh. Then he shook his head solemnly, and offered the decanter to Philip.

"Drink!" he cried. "It is all you think of. Is there a misfortune in the world that you would not try to cure with drink?"

"None," said MacIntyre—"I think there is none. Drink makes a man forget everything. But what is it, Philip? What has happened?"

"Why have you not been near me for a week?"

"Because I have been busy about my own affairs. What *has* happened, then?"

"I have been losing about as fast as a man could lose for seven or eight weeks—"

"Eh, man! luck will—"

"I have no luck but the devil's, I suppose. Listen: you blew the spark into a flame—you and your wonderful secret were at the beginning of it. 'The mighty lever that can make us meellionaires.' You recollect?"

"I can't but say I do."

"Well, the lever's broke into little bits, that's all. I owe more hundreds than I can tell you over what I can pay. I have not bothered to add up the sum total of the book over the Houghton meeting. I can tell you this, though: before Kingdon I had forty-seven creditors; now, I suppose, I've got three or four more. They'd like to meet me, I have not the least doubt. They won't. I'm scratched for all my engagements. Broken down badly. It is not one leg in my case, it's all four."

He laughed. His mind was easier since the anxiety of how he should find the money to pay with had been removed. He had decided not to pay: been desperate and gambled without much hope of paying; come off second best at the game, and had not paid. His desperation had brought some sort of relief with it. Only the reckless man can laugh as he did. Mr. MacIntyre, now many degrees removed from the feeling of recklessness, saw no cause for

making merry, and opened his eyes as wide as it was possible to do, putting on his most sympathizing mask, at the same time that he ejaculated a pious—"Hear that now!" as his young friend's narrative proceeded.

"See there," Philip continued, tossing his betting-book across the table to Mr. MacIntyre, "turn over the pages, and satisfy yourself. There is a line scored through the wins. You won't find many. I backed fifteen horses in the last two days at Newmarket without scoring one win."

"I doubt," said Mr. MacIntyre, shaking his head, and handing back the book—"I doubt you did not keep to the seestem. Ah, now——"

"I did not. Nobody ever did keep to a system. They mean to at the start; but they forget they even meant, till they come to add up a losing account. I thought when you saw what a succession of facers backers have had, you would have guessed what was the matter."

Here he picked up a newspaper a week old, and read—"The complaints of absent accounts were loud and deep, and no wonder. Even bookmakers don't like to be shot at; and two noble lords, besides a baker's dozen of 'untitled noblemen,' have gone in the last few weeks."

"'Untitled noblemen,' MacIntyre, that's for

me. After that awful Monday came, I was frightened at my own shadow for a few days, and hardly dared to look into the paper of a morning. I expected to find my name at the head of the sporting intelligence, or in the agony column with the people wanted. They don't do that, I find; but one fellow has written, after calling about twenty times at the club, to say he shall post me at Tattersall's. Much I care if he does. It will be a poste restante, but I am not likely to be called for."

"Ye don't know that," said MacIntyre, wisely wagging his head.

"I do," said Philip, with his bitter, scornful, hollow laugh. "All is lost—honour, money, all. If I raked together everything I have in the world, I don't suppose I should be able to pay a shilling in the pound. But this is not all. I've had another loss," he went on. "I told that girl the whole truth, and she has left me."

"Is she gone? I am sorry," said MacIntyre. "I've always been vera sorry for the poor little bonnie thing."

"She is gone, and will never come back to me. So that is finished. Let us talk about other things. I suppose, MacIntyre, that the marriage was all a farce?"

The reverend gentleman took two bits of paper—the famous marriage certificates—from his pocket-book, and handed them to Philip.

"The mock certificates," he said. "Yes, Philip, you can do what you like with them. Best tear them up."

Philip threw them into the fire.

"But you told me—"

"Eh, now? Don't let us have a bletherin' about what I told you. You were in one of your moral moods that day, you see; and I always suit my conversation to circumstances. I just thought it best to make the most of what we did. Perhaps I was never an ordained clergyman at all. Perhaps I pretended. I have preached though, on probation. It was at Glasgie. They said I wanted Unction. Eh, sirs, what a man I might have been, with Unction!"

Philip took him by the shoulders, and held him at arm's length.

"MacIntyre, you are a precious scoundrel. I am bad enough, God knows; but not so bad as you. I have the strongest desire at this moment to take you by the throat, and throttle the life out of you."

The philosopher looked up for one moment in alarm, but speedily smiled again.

"You will not, Phil. First, because it would be murder, and you would not like to be hanged. Second, because you would not be such a fool as to hurt the only man who has it in his power to help you."

"You!"

"And third, because your wrath is like a fire of chips. It burns out as soon as it is lighted."

Philip let him go.

"If you are the only man to help me, why the devil don't you, instead of drinking sherry and telling me what a liar you are?"

"I'm going to," said the little man, sitting down with an air of great dignity, and beginning to tremble, because he was at last going to play his great card. "I'm going to. Sit down, Phil, and listen. Let us first face the position. What is it?"

"Ruin and disgrace."

"For want of a few hundreds, which I will put into your hands at once, with plenty more to the back of them."

"Go on, man. Are there any more lies at the bottom of all this?"

"Do not pain me unnecessarily, Philip. You will be sorry, afterwards. This is a very grave and serious matter. Do you remember a con-

versation I had with you after your father's death?"

"I do."

"I hinted then at the possession of certain documents, which might or might not be found useful in proving you the heir to certain property."

"Go on, MacIntyre. Do get on faster."

"I afterwards obtained those proofs. During all the years of my wandering, I have kept them releegiously in my pocket-book, in the hope that they might one day be of use in restoring you, my favourite pupil, to your own."

He dropped his voice, from nervousness. Suppose, after all, the plan should fail? It seemed to Philip that his accents trembled with emotion.

"The papers prove you beyond a doubt—I mean, mind, beyond a legal doubt—to be the sole heir of your father's property, the estate of Fontainebleau, in the Island of Palmiste."

"Arthur's estate! I will not believe it."

"Do not, if you prefer to believe to the contrary. It brings in at present, about £4,000 per annum, clear profit, in good years. There is not a mortgage on it, and it is managed by the most honest man in all the island. Philip, I offer you this—not in an illegal way, not in

a way of which you will hereafter be ashamed, but as a right, your right. I offer you fortune, escape from all your troubles; and Philip—not the least—I offer you legitimacy."

"The proofs, MacIntyre—the proofs."

"Wait, wait. First read and sign this document. It is a secret agreement. It is not possible to receive the sum named by any legal procedure—I trust entirely to your honour. And if you do not obtain the estate, the agreement is not worth the paper it is written on."

Philip read it. It was a paper in which he pledged himself to hand over to MacIntyre, as soon as he got the Fontainebleau estate, the sum of £5,000.

"It will be a cruel thing to turn out Arthur," he said.

"You can settle with all your creditors," said MacIntyre, significantly.

"At the worst, I can but starve," said Philip.

"Hoots toots!" said the philosopher. "I've tried it: you would not like it. Of course you will not starve. Sign the paper, and we will proceed."

Philip took a pen, signed it, and tossed it back.

MacIntyre folded the document, and carefully replaced it in his pocket-book. Then he took

out three or four papers, wrapped in a waterproof cover. They were clean enough, though frayed at the edges, and the ink was yellow with age. He handed them solemnly to Philip. Three of them were letters written by George Durnford, beginning "My dearest wife," and ending with "Your most affectionate husband, George Durnford."

"Obsairve," said Mr. MacIntyre. "The dates of all are *before* that of his marriage with Mdlle. Adrienne de Rosnay. The letters themselves are not sufficient. Look at this."

It was a certificate of marriage between George Durnford and Marie —— no other name.

"And this."

The last paper purported to be a copy of a marriage register from the Roman Catholic chaplain of St. Joseph. To it was appended a statement to the effect that the marriage had been privately solemnized in Mr. Durnford's house, but that the register was duly entered in the church-book.

Philip's eyes flashed.

"If you had told me that you were yourself the Roman Catholic priest, I should not have believed you. MacIntyre, if those papers are what they pretend to be, I am a legitimate son."

"Of course you are. I've known it all along. But I waited my opportunity."

"Who are the witnesses to the marriage?" asked Philip.

"See those signatures. I am one. I was present on the occasion. The other is Adolphe, brother to Marie the bride. The clergyman is dead, and I suppose the other witness, by this time. But you can inquire in Palmiste, if you like. The ways of what we call Providence are obscure. They may appear to be winding. They are, in reality, straight."

Philip made an impatient gesture, and he stopped.

Mr. MacIntyre had played his last card, his King of Trumps, and it looked like winning. He breathed more easily.

"I believe, MacIntyre," said Philip, coolly, "that there is not a single thing in the world that you would not do for money."

"There is not," replied the tutor, with readiness. "There is nothing. And why not? I look round, and see all men engaged in the pursuit of wealth. They have but one thought—to make money. I, too, have been possessed all my life with an ardent desire to be rich. But fortune has persecuted me. Ill-luck has dogged me in all that I have tried. I am past fifty now,

and have but a few years to live. To have a large fortune would bring with it no enjoyment that I any longer greatly care for. But to have a small one would mean ease, respectability, comfort for my declining years, nurses to smooth my pillow, considerate friends. This is what I want. This is what you will give me. I have looked for it all these years, and bided my time. With my five thousand pounds, which is two hundred and fifty pounds a year, I shall go to some quiet country place, and live in comfort. My antecedents will be unknown. I shall be Respectable at last."

The prospect was too much for him, philosopher that he was. He went on, in an agitated voice, walking up and down the room—

"Money! Is there anything in the world that money will not procure? Is it friends? You can get them by the bribe of a dinner. Is it love? You can buy the semblance and win the substance. Is it honour? You can buy that too, if you have got enough money. Is it power? Money is synonymous with power. Is it comfort? Only money will buy it. Is it health? You may win it back by money. Is it independence? You cannot have it without money. Money is the provider of all."

"It won't help you to get to Heaven."

"I beg your pardon. Without it I am—I am damned if you will get to Heaven."

"A curiously involved expression," said Philip, looking at the man with astonishment.

"Answer me this, Phil. Did you ever hear of a poor man repenting, unless it was when he was going to be hanged?"

"I really have not given the subject any consideration.

"You never did. It is only the rich who have leisure to repent. What is a poor man to think about but the chance of to-morrow's dinner? Great heavens, Phil, when I think of how wretchedly, miserably, detestably poor my life has been, my wonder is, not that my life has been so bad, but that it has not been worse. Do you know what grinding poverty is? Do you know what it is to be a poor student at a Scotch Univairsity? Do you know what it means to take up a sacred profession which you are not fit for—to disgrace yourself and lose self-respect before you are five and twenty—to be put to a thousand shifts—to invent a hundred dodges—to lose your dignity as a man—to be a parasite, and fail in that—to take to drink because the years of your manhood are slipping by, and a miserable old age is before you? Tell me, can you guess what all these things mean? Youth!

I had no youth. It was wasted in study and poverty. I dreamed of love and the graces of life. None came to me. No woman has ever loved me. Not one. I have always been too poor even to dream of love. Philip, I like you for one reason. You have kicked me like a dog. You have called me names. You despise me. But you and I are alike in this, that we owe the world a grudge. I rejoiced when I saw you ruining yourself. I stood by at the last and let it go on, because I knew that every hundred pounds you threw away brought me nearer to my end. And that is the five thousand pounds that you will give me."

Philip said nothing. He saw in part what this man was whom he had believed to be a simple, common rogue; saw him as he was—pertinacious, designing, cynically unscrupulous. He recoiled before a nature stronger than his own, and felt abashed.

"The money," MacIntyre went on, "will not come a bit too soon. I am nearly at the end of the hundred pounds I had. Arthur told me I should have another fifty, and then no more. What should I do when that was gone? You remember what I was when you met me in the street?—a poor, famished creature, on one-and-threepence a day. A few more weeks would

have finished me. Even now the effects of that bitter winter are on me, and I wake at night with the terror upon me that those days are coming back—that I shall have to return to the twopenny breakfast, and the fourpenny dinner, and the miserable lodging where I sat at night, gloomy and drinkless. Money! He asks me if I would do anything for money! I, with my memories! Philip, I swear there is no act of dishonesty I would not commit to save myself from this awful dread of destitution that hangs over me day and night. After my miserable life, compensation is due to me. I say, sir, it is due."

His face grew black and lowering.

"If I am not paid what is owing to me, I shall take what I can get. For the forced hypocrisies of my youth, for my servile manhood, for my ill-fortune, my wretched condition of last year, I swear that compensation is due to me. Honesty! The wise man guides himself by circumstances. Well, I've prayed—yes, you may laugh, but I have prayed till my knees were stiff—for some measure, even the smallest, of success in the world, for just a little of that material comfort which makes life tolerable. As well pray for the years to roll back as for fate to be changed. Whatever I do henceforth

I claim as my right. It is my compensation for the sufferings of the past."

He sat down. Philip noticed how shaky he was, how his legs tottered and the perspiration stood in great beads upon his nose—the feature where emotion generally first showed itself with this philosopher. But he answered him not a word.

"Go now," he said, "and show these papers to Arthur. He ought to see them."

MacIntyre put on his hat.

"Don't come back here," said Philip. "Find me at the club. I should choke if I slept a night in this house."

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Arthur heard MacIntyre's story, he was amazed.

"Why did you not tell me all this before?" he asked, at last. "You have known it all these years—why did you not tell it when my father died? Let me look at the letters again. They

are in my father's writing. Is there some villainy in this?"

"The extract from the register, ye'll obsairve," said the philosopher, passing over the injurious nature of the last words, "is certificated by a firm of respectable solicitors, and enclosed to me by their agents in London."

"Why not tell the story before?"

"Loard, loard! it is a suspicious world. You will remember, Mr. Arthur, that I was once violently assaulted by your brother?"

"I remember."

"It was because I hinted at this secret. For no other reason. Therefore, as I was not personally interested in either of you getting the money—though I certainly always received great consideration from Philip—I held my tongue. The time has now come, when poor Phil is ruined."

"Ruined! How?"

"He has lost his money on the turf. He has now nothing. This being the case, I found it time to interfere. Here are my papers—here my proofs. It's vera hard for you, Mr. Arthur, after so many years o' the pillow o' luxury, and ye will commence to remember some of the maxums—"

"What does Philip say?"

"He told me to bring you the things, and tell you the story."

"It seems incredible—impossible. And yet the letters and the certificate."

"You can fight it, Mr. Arthur, if you please. You will have to put me in the box; and I shall, most reluctantly, have to represent to the world the secrets of your father's life."

Arthur recoiled in dismay.

"It is not a question of fighting. It is a question of doing what is right. If only your story is true. Pray, Mr. MacIntyre, what is the price you have put upon it?"

He smote his chest.

"Go on, Arthur, go on. You into whose young mind I poured treasures of philosophy. Insult your aged and poverty-stricken tutor—and a Master of Arts of an ancient and—"

"You sold me an address."

"Pardon me. I borrowed forty pounds of you, and, with a kindness which I regret not to see rated at its real worth, I *gave* you Miss Madeleine's address. I hope you have made good use of it."

"What does it matter to you, sir, what use I have made of it?"

"Not at a', not at a'. Let us come back to our business. The story is not mine alone, Ar-

thur. It rests on the evidence of the Church. Man tells lies. Church registers are infallible. I suppose that Marie died in England before the second marriage—"

"Mr. MacIntyre, do you want me to wring off your neck?"

"The facs of the case—the facs of the case only. Your elder brother, sir, received my communication without any of the manifestations of temper which you have shown. Naturally, there is a difference between you."

"You should have told us ten years ago. You should have told us even three months ago. Why did you not?"

"To begin with, I saw no reason for speaking at all, till my friend, as well as old pupil, lost his money. This was yesterday."

"And why next?"

"Because I did not choose."

This was the only outward mark of resentment at Arthur's suspicions which the sage allowed himself.

He gave a long sniff of satisfaction, and went on—

"There may be a weakness in the evidence. The law might be evaded by a crafty counsel. You can fight the question, if you like. But the *right* of the case will remain unaltered. Arthur

Durnford, you are only the second son of your father."

Arthur was silent for awhile, leaning his head on his hand.

"Come into the City with me. Do you object to bring your papers to my lawyer's?"

"Not at a', not at a'. Let us go at once," answered MacIntyre, apparently in great good humour. "And don't be overmuch cast down, Arthur, at this temporary revairse of circumstances. Philip will give you enough to live upon. If not, there are several lines of life open to you. You may be a private tutor, like me. Then, indeed, my example will not have been wholly in vain."

He pursued this theme as they drove into the City in a cab, illustrating his position by reference to passages in his own life, wherein he had imitated the magnanimity of Themistocles, the clemency of Alexander, the continence of Scipio, and the generosity of Cæsar.

"Poor I may be," he said, "and certainly am; but at least I can reflect—the reflection alone is worth a bottle of Isla whisky—on temptations avoided and good effected. I forgive you, Arthur, for your hard words; and remain, as I always have been, your best friend."

Arthur answered little, and that in mono-

syllables. He was so much pre-occupied, that the man's prattle dropped unheeded on his ears.

What was the right thing to do?

The lawyer heard what Arthur had to say, read the documents carefully—from time to time casting a furtive glance on MacIntyre, who sat with an air of great dignity, and even virtue, in his countenance, and occasionally rubbed his nose.

"You are the only surviving witness, Mr. MacIntyre?"

"I am," returned our Alexander. "That is, the only one, I believe, surviving. 'Flesh is grass.' The priest was younger than myself; but, you see, he is gone first. Adolphe might be found, perhaps, though I think he is dead too."

"It is now twenty-seven years since this marriage, according to your certificate, was contracted. Would you kindly tell us more about it?"

"With pleasure. It took place in Mr. Durnford's own house at Fontainebleau, in the dining-room. You remember our lessons—those delightful lessons—which used to take place in the dining-room, Arthur? It's vera sweet to recall old days. It was in the evening. Marie left her mistress's house in the afternoon. No one

knew where she had gone except myself. I helped her to escape."

"Oh!" said the lawyer, "you acted as—as the uncle of Cressida. It was a creditable position for you to occupy."

"Perhaps," said MacIntyre, with all that was left of his power of blushing mantling to his nose —"perhaps. The necessities of the stomach have on several occasions obliged me to take part in actions of which my conscience disapproved. The needy man has no choice. I approve the better cause, even when fate, armed with the weapon of hunger, has obliged me to follow the worse. In the words of the Latin poet — I hope, sir, you have not entirely neglected the Humanities — 'Dum meliora probo—'"

"My dear sir," interrupted the lawyer, "pray get on with your story."

"Marie required a good deal of persuading," he went on, gaining courage as he began to unfold his web of fiction. "Mr. Durnford, a young man at the time, had conceived a violent passion for her. She was as white as a European, and had no marks at all of her descent, except her full black hair. Her mother, indeed, was a mulatto; and perhaps her father was a white man —I don't know. On the evening when I drove

her over to Fontainebleau, I had got Father O'Callinan to ride up in the afternoon. He knew what he was to do. It was promised to Marie; and there in the sitting-room, with myself and Adolphe, a half-blood brother of Marie, who was sworn to secrecy, the marriage was performed, and these papers signed. A year and a half later, after her boy was born, Marie went away to Europe, and Mr. Durnford married Mademoiselle Adrienne de Rosnay."

"And pray, how did the papers come into your hands?"

MacIntyre for a moment hesitated, and a violent effusion of red mounted to his nose.

"After the death of Mr. Durnford, I went through his papers."

"As a legally appointed agent?"

"No. As a confidential friend of the family, in which I had been a tutor for many years," said MacIntyre.

"In other words, you ransacked my father's desk?" asked Arthur.

"Do not put an injurious construction on the proceeding," said MacIntyre. "I searched the drawers for some papers of my own, and found not only my own private documents, but also these letters."

"Oh!" said the lawyer. "Dear me! Would

you be good enough to step outside? Stay, though, what has become of—of—Marie?"

"She went to Europe, and was lost sight of. I suppose she died."

"Thank you," said the lawyer, opening the door. "You will find the papers in the next room. Mr. Thompson, pray give this gentleman the *Times*. Now, Mr. Durnford, this is an ugly case. Tell me what you know of this man."

Arthur told him everything.

"He is evidently a rogue. And I believe that the whole thing is a forgery. Do you know your father's handwriting?"

"Yes; the letters are his."

"Well, well, it may be. Still, observe that in the only place where the word Marie occurs, the writing looks to me uncertain, and the word laps over beyond the line. It may possibly have been put in afterwards. Are you sure that the dates are in the same writing as the letters?"

"They look so. Besides, there is the church register."

"Registers *have* been tampered with, especially in novels. But what does the man mean by it all: the secrecy for ten years—the suddenness of the revelation? *What does he get for it?*"

"Philip, I am sure, would not pay for his secret."

"Humph! I don't know. The church register is the only thing to fear. Fight it, Mr. Durnford."

"It is not the winning or losing," Arthur replied. "That seems the least part of it."

The lawyer stared at him.

"To Philip it means legitimacy. He *must* fight."

"My dear sir, it *may* also mean legitimacy to you."

"I think not. I am *quite* sure that my father would not have married a second time, except with the clearest proof of his first wife's death. That is to me a conviction. I have nothing to fear on that ground. But there is another thing. How can I drag my father's life and character into open court?"

"Would you sacrifice everything for the mere sake of hiding scandals five and twenty years old?"

"If they are my father's—yes."

"Well, well—let us see."

He went into the outer office, and requested permission to see the papers again, holding them up to the light to see the water-mark. Mr. MacIntyre watched him steadily, with a twinkle in his eye distinctly resembling a wink. The lawyer returned the papers, and went back.

"He's a crafty rascal, at least. The water-marks are all right. Mr. Durnford, there is villainy in it. Do nothing rashly."

"Philip will press on the case. I only begin now to understand what it may mean to him—what the past has been for him. I shall not fight with my brother."

"You will acknowledge everything?"

"No," said Arthur, straightening himself, as one who is doing a strong thing, "I shall hide everything. I may be a coward, but I *will not* have my father's name hawked about in public, and the story of his youth—and—and—perhaps his sins, told to the whole world. Let Philip have all the money. I retire. Let Philip have all the money. I shall not starve, I dare say."

"Nonsense, nonsense. As your lawyer, I protest against it. My dear sir, the time for Quixotism has passed away. People will ask questions, too. What will you say?"

"Nothing. Let them ask what they please. The secret is mine—and Philip's—and this man's. Not one of us will speak of it."

"As for Mr. MacIntyre, certainly not—provided his silence is bought. Will your brother buy it?"

"I shall not ask. I should excuse him if he did."

"Take advice, Mr. Durnford, take advice."

"I will take advice. I will put the whole facts into the hands of a third person, and be guided by the counsel I get from her."

"If it is a lady," the lawyer returned, laughing, "I give you up. But come and see me to-morrow."

Arthur went out by the private door, forgetting all about Mr. MacIntyre, who still sat behind the *Times*, waiting. The time passed on —an hour or two—before the lawyer came again into the outer office. Perhaps he kept his man waiting on purpose, after the sweet and gentle practice of a Bismarck, "letting him cook in his own juice."

"What!—you there still, Mr. MacIntyre? I thought you gone long ago, with Mr. Durnford. Come in again — come and have a glass of sherry. Now, then, sit down—sit down. We are men of business here, and shall soon understand each other. You will find that, Mr. MacIntyre, if you are a judge of sherry, and I have no doubt you are a very excellent judge—"

"Pretty well—pretty well. I am better at whisky."

"Aha! very good—very good, indeed. Reminds me of a thing I once heard said. But never mind now. Let me give you another

glass. Dry, you observe, but generous. A fat wine. A wine with bone and muscle. I knew you'd like it." He sat down opposite his visitor, clapped him on the knee, and laughed. "And now let us talk about this affair which you have been the means of bringing to light."

"Under Providence."

"Quite so. Under Providence, as you say. You know, I feel for Arthur Durnford's position in this case."

"I am but an instrument," said MacIntyre, with a solemn face and another pull at the sherry—"a vera humble instrument. But life is so. The moral philosopher has often called attention to the curious way in which our sins become pitfalls for our children. I could give you some striking passages indirectly bearing upon the point from Stewart and Reid. But perhaps, Mr.—I forget your name—you are not a parent?"

He crossed his legs, and brought the tips of his fingers together.

"Another time, my dear sir, another time. By the way, is it not *rather* unusual for an Englishman to marry a mulatto?"

"Most unusual. Nothing ever surprised me so much. I have often obsairved, in my progress through life, that—"

"Yes. The circumstance will tell in court."

Mr. MacIntyre visibly started.

"You will go into court?"

Doubtless," returned the lawyer, watching his man—in whom, however, he saw no other sign of emotion. "Doubtless—your own evidence will be the main chain, so to speak. I hope you don't mind cross-examination."

"When a medicine, however disagreeable, has to be taken, it must be taken."

"Quite so. They will probably inquire into all your antecedents—eh?—ask you all sorts of impudent questions—ha! ha! Whether you ever got into trouble? We, the lawyers for our side, will make it our business to hunt up everything about you."

"What trouble?"

"Into the hands of the law, you know—eh? Oh, most absurd, I assure you. I remember a similar case to this, when the principal witness was obliged to confess that he had sold his information. The case was lost, sir—lost by that simple fact. Now, you see, what an ass that man was! Had he gone to the lawyers on the other side, a respectable firm like ours—had he come to me, for instance, in a friendly way, and said 'My dear sir, I have certain papers—I am a needy man. There they are. We are men

of the world.' Had he, in fact, behaved as a man of sense, he would have been, sir—for in losing the case he lost his reward—he would have been"—here the speaker looked sharply in the face of Mr. MacIntyre—"a thousand pounds in pocket."

He remained stolid—only helping himself to another glass of wine.

"Very good thing, Mr.—really, I have not caught your name."

"Never mind, sir—never mind my name. It is on the door plate, if you wish to read it. But your opinion now as to my man's stupidity?"

"Well, you see—it may be, after all, a question of degree. I am myself induced to think, that if you had offered him ten thousand, he might have accepted. Money down, of course."

The cool audacity of this indirect proposal staggered the lawyer. He put the stopper in the decanter of sherry, and rose.

"I should like to see you again, Mr. MacIntyre."

"Mr. Arthur has gone to see Philip. Do you know Arthur Durnford, sir?"

"I believe I do."

"Not so well as I do. I will tell you something about him. He is ready to do anything that he thinks honourable, even to strip himself

to the last shilling; and he is jealous that no word should be breathed against his father. He is now gone to consult Miss Madeleine. I know what her advice will be."

"Well?"

"And do you know Philip? No—not so well as I do. I left him a ruined man. That you know, perhaps. He will do anything for money when it is wanted to save his honour. He wants it now for that purpose. And he would do anything in the whole world to remove the stain of illegitimacy and black blood. The latter is impossible. The former can now be arranged. Ten thousand pounds, sir? Good heavens! If an estate is worth more than four thousand a year, and if you have got three times ten thousand accumulated—Do you know the story of the Sibyl, Mr.—really, I forget your name. Never mind. You remember the story, sir? Probably you had *some* humanities when you were a boy. She came back, sir, again and again; and the third time her price was three times that of her first."

"In point of fact, Mr. MacIntyre, you want to sell your information for ten thousand pounds. It is a disgraceful—"

Mr. MacIntyre started and opened his eyes.

"The absence of the reasoning faculty in Eng-

land is vera wonderful. Man! I was talking of general principles. I was giving you my opeenion on the creature that would not sell his information. I would have you to know, sir, that I am not in the habit of selling anything. I am a Master of Arts, sir, of an ancient and honourable Univairsity—the Univairsity of Aberdeen. And I wish ye good morning, sir."

He put on his hat, and stalked away with dignity.

CHAPTER XIV.

ARTHUR went to Madeleine for advice, being one of those who, when they have made up their minds to a line of action, are not satisfied without being fortified in their design by their friends.

He called after dinner, and found the two ladies alone—Mrs. Longworthy asleep and Madeleine reading.

"Coming in here," he said, in a low voice, "is like coming into a haven of repose. You are always peaceful."

"Yes—a woman's conflicts are below the surface, mostly. And my own troubles lie two miles away, as you know. When are you really going to make up your mind to come and help us?"

"What am I to do? Teach science again?"

"No; lecture, start clubs, give concerts—you play very well—write tracts, do all sorts of things that will help the people to raise themselves."

"I am afraid I should not do for it, Madeleine. But I will try to join you. Only first give me your advice on a very serious matter."

He told his story.

"Your father married to a mulatto girl? Arthur, it is impossible."

"So I should have said; but it seems true. There are the certificates of marriage, duly signed and attested. And not by the man MacIntyre himself—or we might suspect them—but by a legal firm of Palmiste. You know them. There can be no doubt whatever. And Philip is my brother."

"I always knew it," murmured Mrs. Longworthy, waking up to enjoy her lazy triumph. "I told you, Arthur, that your father had no brothers."

"I suppose," Arthur continued, "that by some accident this mulatto girl, my father's first wife, died early, and that on hearing of her death my father married again. But MacIntyre knows nothing of this; he only knows that Marie—we will go on calling her Marie—went away to England."

'And the result of the whole?"

"Would be, if the claim were substantiated, that I have nothing: I am a beggar. All the estate, and all the accumulations, go to Philip."

"Have you seen Philip?"

"Not yet. I shall go and see him in the morning. I have not seen him for more than four months. You know we were three months in Italy. But I have heard one or two stories about him. I am afraid he has lost money betting."

"What are you going to do?"

"The lawyer says fight. What ought I to do, Madeleine?"

"Fighting means further exposure of old scandals, and raking up private histories which may as well be left buried. Is there no middle way?"

"None. Either he is the rightful heir, or I am. To Phil it means not only fortune, but also legitimacy. I know now—I have known for some little time—what it is that has made Phil what he is. It is not the love of that fast life to which he belongs, so much as his constant sense of his birth, and the tinge of the black blood. Can you not understand it, Madeleine?"

"But if the certificates are correct, and not forgeries, there can be no doubt whatever of the thing."

"There can be none—Philip is the heir."

They were silent for awhile, Mrs. Longworthy only giving to the group that feeling of repose which is caused by the long breathing of one who slumbers.

"If it will make you work, Arthur," whispered Madeleine, "it will be a good thing for you. Let it go, my friend; let your brother take it, and raise no further questions about your father's private history. It may be all a forgery, put together by that creature, your Scotch tutor; only be very sure that Philip knows nothing about it. Go out into the world, and work with other men. It will be better for you. Or come and work with me."

"That is impossible, Madeleine," he whispered —"except on one condition."

She flushed scarlet for a moment, and then she answered directly, and to the point.

"I know what your condition is. We have known each other so long, Arthur, that I am afraid."

"What are you afraid of?"

"I am afraid that our old brother and sister feeling may be all that you can have for me."

"Listen a moment, Madeleine. When I saw you first—I mean six months ago—I was afraid of you. You were so queenly, so beautiful, so unlike the child I loved so many years ago.

When I came here day after day, and found you always the same—always kind, thoughtful, sisterly—the old feeling arose again, and I felt once more that, as of old, we were brother and sister. But when I was with you abroad, when we were together every day and all day, that feeling died away again, and another has sprung up in its place. Madeleine, I cannot work with you as you wished, because I love you. If you were another girl, if I did not know you so well, I should make fine speeches about coming to you as a beggar, now that I have lost all my money. But you do not want these. Let me go, or bid me stay. But, Madeleine, whatever you do, do not let me lose your friendship."

"You are sure you love me, Arthur?" she murmured, between her lips—her eyes softened, her cheek glowing.

"Am I sure? Do you know that I have sprung into new being since I found I loved you? My blood flows faster, my life has quickened. I can feel, I can hope. Madeleine, I can work. Before, what was my very existence? It was life without life, light without sunshine, work without a purpose, days that brought neither hope nor regret. Do I love you, Madeleine?"

"Then, Arthur," she whispered, leaning forward so that her lips met his, "I have always loved you. Take me, I am altogether yours."

It was then that Mrs. Longworthy showed the real goodness of her heart. She had been awake for some moments, and was taking in the situation with all her eyes. Now she rose, and gathering her skirts round her, she swept slowly out of the room, remarking as she went—

"You will find me in the dining-room, my dears, as soon as you have done talking."

They sat and talked together, hand in hand, of the life that they would lead, of the perfect confidence there should be between them, of all high and sweet things that a man can only tell to a woman. Young fellows whisper to each other something of their inner life—it can only be done between eighteen and twenty-two—and ever after there is a bond of union between them that is always felt, if not acknowledged. Sometimes, too, at night, on the deck of a ship, when the moonlight is broken into ten thousand fragments in the white track, and the stars are gazing solemnly at us with their wide and pitying eyes, men may lay bare the secrets of their soul. One of the many whom I have known—he is ten thousand miles from here—in my wanderings abroad—I spent six months beneath the

same roof with him—was wont to rise at dead of night, and pace the verandah for an hour or two. If you heard him, and got up to join him, he would *talk* to you. The memory of his talk is with me still. I remembered it in the morning, but he did not. Which was the real man, which was the false, I never knew. One lived by day, and one by night. I think the man of the night —he who showed me his thoughts—was the true man. He is the one whom I love to recall.

While they talked, Mrs. Longworthy slumbered by the table in the dining-room.

Outside, Laura was wandering in the cold and pitiless streets.

At the house at Notting-hill, Philip and MacIntyre were drinking together—Philip to drown his excitement, which had absolutely driven Laura, for the time, out of his head; Mr. MacIntyre, to drown his anxiety. If he lost this stake! But it looked like winning.

Between the two were a couple of champagne bottles, empty. At stroke of ten, MacIntyre rang the bell for tumblers. At twelve, Philip went to bed too drunk to speak. At one, Mr. MacIntyre fell prone upon the hearthrug and slumbered there. In the morning, at seven, he awoke, and finding where he was, got up, rubbed

his nose thoughtfully, and went home to Keppel-street.

"It's wonderfu'," he remarked when he got back to his lodgings and sat down to breakfast, "What a restorer is the morning air. When I go down to Scotland I shall always get up early, to shake off the whisky of the night. Elizabeth, my lassie, I think you may bring me another rasher of bacon."

CHAPTER XV.

"I GOT this address of yours from Mac-Intyre," said Arthur, calling on Philip at midday. "Why have you been hiding away so long?"

"There has been no hiding," said Philip, half sullenly.

Then both men paused, thinking of the words that were to be spoken between them.

Arthur was the first to speak.

"Of course you know what MacIntyre came to tell me."

"Of course I know it."

"Whatever happens, Philip, let us be friends still. If it is clear that my father married—was married—before he married my mother, there is nothing more to be said."

Both flushed scarlet.

"You see, Arthur, I have known since I was fifteen years old—no matter how—that I am your half-brother. This question is more to me than property. It is legitimacy."

"I know."

"But go by what your lawyer advises. Let us make a legal question of it all."

"My lawyer says fight."

"Then fight."

"Fighting means bringing the private life of our father into public, making known things that ought not to be revealed. I think I cannot fight, Phil."

"But I *must*, Arthur."

"Yes, and I must give way. After all, Phil, it matters very little to me, so far as the money goes. I shall have to work; but I am a man of

very simple habits. You will make a better planter than I. You will go out and do great things for Palmiste."

"Not I. I fight for my legitimacy. I shall do no great things, either here or in Palmiste."

"Let me tell you about the property, Phil. No—it is best that you should know. It is a very good property. In ordinary years, when there is no hurricane, it is worth more than four thousand pounds a year. I do not spend one-fourth of that amount. There are consequently large accumulations. I should think I am worth thirty thousand pounds—that is, you are worth."

"It is not the value of the property—"

"I know. Still you ought to learn all that is at stake. This is yours. I surrender it all, rather than go to law over our father's grave."

"I must prove my legitimate birth, if I can, Arthur. Think of it. Think what it is to me, who have all along been weighted with my birth, to be made free—free and equal to all other men."

"I do think of it. I think a great deal of it. If I were in your place, nothing should persuade me to forego the chance of setting this right. Still, I believe you have always exaggerated the importance of the point."

"It may be so. I do not think so."

"And now, Phil, let us talk it over completely. I am in your hands. The whole estate will be yours as soon as the transfer can be made. But you will not let me go quite empty-handed."

"Good heavens—no!" cried Philip. "I believe you are the most chivalrous man in the world. Empty-handed! No. Take what you will."

"Give me what you have yourself, and I shall be content."

"You mean what I had, I suppose. Make it double, Arthur, and I shall be content—content in a way. How is any man to be contented who has the slave blood in his veins? Look here." He pulled his short, curly black hair. "This comes from the negro wool. And look here." He held out his hand. "Do you see the blue below the nails? That comes from the negro blood. And look at my eyes. Do you see the black streak beneath them? Negro blood, I tell you. And generation after generation may pass, but these marks never die away. My face, at least, is like my father's. I am more like him than you are, Arthur."

"You are too sensitive, Phil. Do you really seriously think the old prejudices are founded in reason? Do you imagine that you are the least

worse for having this little admixture of race in your blood?"

"I do," said his brother. "I know that I am worse. I feel it. When white men are calm, I am excited. When they are careless about their superiority, I am anxious to assert mine. When they are self-possessed, I am self-conscious. When they are at ease, I am vain. I know my faults. I can do things as well as any man, but I can do nothing so well as some men. That is the curse of the mulatto, the octoroon, or whatever you like to call him. Unstable as water, we never excel. So far we are like Judah, the son of Jacob, founder, you know, of the celebrated tribe of that name."

They were silent for a while.

"Even now I have made myself a greater fool, a greater ass than you would conceive possible. If ever you hear stories about me, Arthur—by Jove, you are sure to hear them!"—he suddenly remembered Venn, and his friendship with Arthur—"think that I am more than sorry; not repentant, because I do not see any good in repentance. Milk that is spilt, eggs that are broken, money that is spent, sins that are committed, are so many faits accomplis. Well, never mind. Let us return to business. You will take the accumulated funds."

"No; I will take ten thousand pounds, and I shall be rich."

"Have what you like. And now take me to your lawyer's, and let us tell him what we are going to do. And if at any moment, Arthur, either now or hereafter, you wish to rescind your transfer, you shall do it, and we will fight. By gad, the prodigal son always gets the best of it! The good young man toils and moils, and gets nothing. Then, you see, the scapegrace comes home. Quick, the fatted calf —kill, cook, light the fire, make the stuffing, roast the veal, broach the cask, and spread the feast."

So he passed, in his light way, from repentance to cynicism, happy at heart in one thing—that now he could face his creditors and meet his engagements.

It was a week after this that MacIntyre, who had been calling every day at the Burleigh Club, and at Notting-hill—being a prey to the most gnawing anxieties he had ever known—at last found Philip at home.

He was greeted with a shout of laughter—not, it is true, of that kind which we are accustomed to associate with the mirth of innocence. Perhaps Philip's joyousness had something in it of the Sardinian character.

"Come, Prince of Evil Devices, and receive your due."

"You are pleased to be facetious," observed MacIntyre.

"Haven't I a right to be facetious? Do not I owe it to you that I have got rid of a wife, and come into a fortune? Sit down, man, and let us have a reckoning. My engagements are met. It is all settled. Arthur retires, and the heir-at-law steps in. Rid of a wife—with dishonour saved, and honour gained — what do I owe you? Five thousand is too paltry a sum to speak of."

MacIntyre turned perfectly white, and shivered from head to foot.

"The papers are signed—the transfer is completed. I am in possession of the estate of Fontainebleau and fifteen thousand pounds in Stocks. It is your doing, MacIntyre. You shall have the money bargained for. Give me up the agreement."

He took it from his pocket, and handed it over, with trembling hands. He was unable to speak, for very astonishment. He grew faint, and staggered against the table.

Phil caught him by the arm.

"Why, what is the matter, man? Will you have some brandy?"

"Not now, Phil—not now. Let me sit down a moment, and recover myself."

Presently he started up again.

"Now," he cried—"at once; let me have no delay. The money, Phil—the money! Let me handle it. Ah! At last—at last! I have been anxious, Phil. I was afraid there was some link missing—some possible doubt; but it is all right. I have won the prize I worked for."

"You have won the compensation you were talking about the other night."

"Yes," said the philosopher—"the compensation—ah, yes, the compensation! It has come."

"And without any of the little hankey-pankey that the world has agreed to condemn—isn't that so?"

"Surely—surely."

He looked at Philip with steady eyes, but shaky lips.

"A righteous man, you know, never begs his bread."

"I've begged mine, like the unrighteous—or next door to it. The next door to it, may be, was not included in the text."

"Obviously, the inference is that you are a righteous man. But, come—one word of explanation first. You know when I met you in the street?"

"As if I shall ever forget the time."

"You had those papers in your pocket then?"

"They have never left me since I took them away from Palmiste."

"Why did you not produce them at once?"

"Because the risk was too great. I wanted to sell them. I wanted to see how you would take the chance. It was one I could not afford to risk. When I saw [you going downhill, I knew that I had only to wait for the end. Everything helped me. You became more and more involved. I became more and more certain; but it was not till the very end that I dared bring them out."

"And then you thought you could win?"

"I did. I knew that under the cloud of misfortunes any of the old misplaced generosity to your milksop of a brother would be finally put away and done with, and that the lure—legitimacy and a fortune—would be too much for you to withstand. I rejoiced, Philip—I rejoiced."

Philip was silent. By all the rules, he should have kicked this man then and there. But he was accustomed to the calculating and unscrupulous ways of the creature. Besides, he half liked him. The very openness of his wickedness was a kind of charm. It was only one

more confession—a confession already more than half made.

"You have won, then. Let that be your consolation. And now tell me, MacIntyre. Swear by all that you hold sacred— Stay, is there anything you hold sacred?"

"Money—I will swear by money. Or drink —I will swear by drink."

"Swear, then, anyhow, that you will tell me the truth. Did my father write those letters?"

"He did, Philip—I swear it. He did, indeed."

Only the smallest suppressio veri—only the dates that were added long afterwards by himself.

"And the marriage. Is that register really in the church book?"

"I swear it is there. Did you not see the attestation of the Palmiste lawyers? It is really there!"

So it was. He might have added, to complete the truth of the attestation, that he had himself placed it there.

"Then I am the lawful heir. I have not defrauded Arthur."

"You have not. What does Arthur get out of it?"

"Ten thousand."

"And vera handsome, too. Double of my share. Arthur has done well. Now give me my money, Phil."

Philip gave him a bank pass-book.

"I have paid into your account at this bank the sum of five thousand pounds—you can see the note of the amount. Here is your cheque-book. Go, now, man, and be happy in your own way."

"Yes, I will go. You are a rich man. I am as rich as I wish to be. My old maxums will no longer be of any use either to you or to me. It pains me only to think that I must not, with my experience, dissemble my convictions and go over to the other side, preaching in future that honesty is the best policy. I may vera likely give lectures to show how merit is rewarded and steady effort always commands success. Steady effort has been, as you know, of great use to me. Industry is the best thing going. We always get what we deserve. Everything is for the best. Whatever is is right. The prosperous man goes back to the copy books for his philosophy, and all his reading is thrown away. Now, my experience is the contrary. It is only the clumsy sinners who get punished. The innocent man very often receives the flogging. Therein the moral world differs from the

natural. For if you run your head against a post, you infallibly get a headache. He who would be rich must also be cautious. If he can escape detection, he will acquire money, and therefore happiness. My dear pupil, a word of parting advice."

"No," replied Philip. "Go. I hardly know whether to thank you or to curse you. I think I must curse you. You have poisoned the atmosphere of life for me. I have got riches without enjoyment. I can never be happy again, with the memory of the past — your doing."

"Poor little leddy," sighed MacIntyre. "I'm vera sorry — I'm vera sorry, indeed, for her hard fate. I wish it had never been done. Eh, Phil—it was an awfu' piece of wickedness—"

"It was. God forgive us both! But it can never be forgiven."

"I'm vera sorry, Phil. It was a clumsy thing. But there—we won't talk about it. What was it I was telling you some time ago, Phil? The poor man never repents—it is only the rich. See, now—I am rich, and I begin to repent at once. Eh, man, it is a terrible time I have before me! There's just an awfu' heap to repent for. And pocket handkerchiefs, too, vera ex-

pensive. As soon as I get settled, I shall begin. But where? Phil, I think I shall work backwards. It will come easier so. Obsairve. He who tackles his worst foe at once has little to fear from the rest. The drink, and the troubles at Sydney—all these things are venial. But the lassie, Phil, the lassie—I must begin my repentance with the lassie."

"You will never begin your repentance at all. You will go on getting drunk till you die."

"Philip Durnford," returned Mr. MacIntyre, magisterially, "you pain me. After an acquaintance of nearly twenty years—after all the maxums I have taught you, and the corpus of oreeginal and borrowed philosophy that I have compiled and digested for you—to think that you could say a thing like that. Know, sir, once for all, that the man at ease with fortune never drinks, save in moderation. The philosopher gets drunk when his cares become too much for him. He changes his world when the present is intolerable. Some poor creatures commit suicide. The true philosopher drinks. He alone is unhappy who has not the means of getting drunk. When I was between the boards, I am not ashamed to confess, I used to save twopence a day. That made a shilling a

week. With that I was able to get drunk on Sunday, by taking two pennyworths of gin and porter in alternate swigs. But that is all over. Philip, my pupil, I shall go away. I shall go back to Scotland, among my own people, as an elder of the kirk, which I intend to be. I shall set an example of rigid doctrine, Sabbatarian strictness, and stern morality. After a', it is good for the vulgus—the common herd—to be kept to strict rules. But drink—no, sir. Intoxication and Alexander MacIntyre have parted company. I'm far from saying that I shall not take my glass, whiles—the twal' hoor, especially. That is but natural. But intemperance! Sir, the thought degrades me."

He buttoned up his coat, and put on his hat.

"Farewell, Philip; you will never see me again. As for that poor young thing—"

"Do not provoke me too much," said Philip, growing pale.

"I was only going to say, that if you can take her back it is your duty. I'm vera sorry. She was bonnie, she was kind, she was douce, she was faithful. Ah! Phil, Phil!—it is a terrible thing to think of, the wickedness of the world! I must go away at once, and begin my repentance."

He shook his head from side to side, seized Philip by the hand, and disappeared.

And this was the last that Philip Durnford ever saw of his old tutor.

CHAPTER XVI.

LEAVING the house, poor little Lollie walked quickly away into the dark November mist, and down the road. She had no purpose; for as yet she had but one thought—to get away; to see the last of a house which had witnessed her shame and suffering; to take herself somewhere—it mattered not where—till the dull, dead pain in her brow would go away, and she should feel again able to see things clearly—able to go to Mr. Venn, and tell him all. As she went along the streets, and passed the lighted shops, it seemed that every woman shunned her, or looked at her in contempt, and every man stared. In all the passers-by she detected the glance of scorn. The very beggars did not ask her for alms; the crossing sweepers allowed her to pass unnoticed.

It was only two o'clock, and she had more than two hours of daylight before her. She pulled down her veil and walked on, her fingers interlaced, like a suppliant's, feeling for the lost wedding ring. She passed down the long Edgware-road, which seemed to have no end, and where the noise of the cabs nearly drove her mad. At last she came to the Park, where the comparative quiet soothed her nerves. But she walked on, and presently found herself in Piccadilly. She hurried across the road here, and got into the Green Park, which was even quieter and more deserted than the other. And so at last into St. James's, the best of the three, beyond which arose the intolerable noise and tumult of the streets. She sat down on one of the benches. It was the very same bench where she had once sat with Philip, talking over the meaning of love and marriage. Alas! she knew by this time what one might mean, but not the other. For as she sat alone, and the early evening closed round her, she felt how, through all, her marriage was but a mockery of everything—of love, because she never loved him; of a real ceremony, because the man was no clergyman. How there was no religion in what she had done, no duty, no prudence—nothing but a vain and ignorant desire to please

her guardian. And, after all, he had turned her off.

But as yet she could think of nothing clearly.

Two hours since she left him — only two hours!—and it seemed an age, and the last three months a dream of long ago. And as she tried to think, the stream of her thoughts would rush backwards in her head, as if stopped and turned by some sudden dam.

Big Ben struck four. Presently there came to her a policeman, with hirsute countenance and kindly eyes.

"The Park gates shut at half-past four, miss. Don't you think you had better not sit any longer under this dripping tree?"

She got up at once—submissive. Poor little Lollie, always obedient, always douce.

"I will go, if you like."

"Hadn't you better go home, miss?"

She made no answer, but looked at him sadly for a moment, and then, drawing her veil tighter over her face, went slowly through the gates and passed through the Horse Guards. In the Strand, the shops were all lit up, and things looked brighter. She went down the street slowly, looking into every window as she passed, trying to think what it was she wanted to buy. Here were chains, gold watches, and silver cups;

and here—what is it makes her heart leap up within her, and her pale cheek glow?—a tray of wedding rings. She hurried in, she held out her finger to be measured without saying a word, and pointed to the tray. The ring cost her a guinea, and so she had nineteen shillings left. But she came out relieved of a little of the pain that oppressed her, and went on happier, as if something had been restored to her.

It was nearly six when she came to Chancery-lane; and as she saw the old familiar, ugly street once more, a great yearning came over her heart, for was it not the street that leads to Gray's Inn?

"I will arise and go unto my father," said the poor prodigal—say all of us, when sorrow and punishment fall upon us. "I will go to Mr. Venn," thought Lollie.

She quickened her step, and came to the familiar portals. No one saw her go in. She mounted the stairs—ah, how often had she run up before!—thinking what she should say. Alas! when she got there, the outer door was shut, and Mr. Venn was not at home.

Then her heart fell; and she burst into low wailings and tears, leaning her cheek against the door, as if that could sympathize with her trouble. It was the hour when every man in

Gray's Inn was gone to dinner, and no one was on the staircase to hear her.

She might have known, had she reflected. But she could not think. Time had no more any meaning for her. She thought that Mr. Venn was gone away altogether, and that she had no longer a single friend left in the whole world. So, when the paroxysm of tears, the first she had shed, had passed, she crept downstairs again, and turned away to go out at the north gate, by Raymond's-buildings. Alas, alas! had she taken the other turning she would have met Venn himself, almost as sad as she was, returning home to his desolate chambers.

Seven o'clock—eight—nine. The shops are being shut now, and the streets not so crowded. There are not so many carts about, which is good for her nerves. But the rain is pouring upon her. She is somewhere about Regent's Park — walking, walking still. The rain falls heavily. Her dress is wet through, and clings to her limbs; but she staggers on, mechanically.

Hartley Venn is in his chambers, sitting over the fire, brooding.

Philip is drinking, and playing cards.

Men pass by and speak to her. She does not hear, and takes no notice.

Twelve o'clock—one o'clock. The passengers in the street are very few now.

A rush of many people and of galloping horses. There is a fire, and the cavalcade of rescue runs headlong down the street, followed by a little mob of boys and men. They are always awake, these boys and men, ready for plunder.

Then silence again.

Two o'clock. The street is quite empty now. Then from a side street there are loud screams and cries, and a woman rushes into the road with a wild shriek. She passes close to Lollie. Her face is bleeding, her clothes are torn. She waves her arms like some wild Cassandra, as one who prophesies the woe that shall fall upon the city. But it is nothing. Only the wail of despair and misery; for she is starving, and her husband in a drunken rage has struck her down and trampled on her. Oh! brothers and sisters, how we suffer, how we suffer for our sins!

Three o'clock. She is in Oxford-street, the stony-hearted. It is quite empty. Not even a policeman in sight. Her eyes are heavy and dim; her head is burning; an unnatural strength possesses her limbs; her shoulders have fallen forward. Is this Hartley Venn's little girl? This with the bowed head, the draggled dress, the

weary gait? Oh! Hartley, could you have seen her then, it would have been bad for Philip and his tutor! But Hartley is sound asleep, and so is Philip; so, too, is Mr. MacIntyre. They are all asleep and comfortable in their beds, and only the tender and delicate girl is wandering about in the night under the rain.

The city is sleeping. A strange hush has fallen over London. Not the sound of a single wheel, not a footstep. The silence strikes her; for it seems to have come suddenly. She lifts her head, and looks round, with a moan of weariness and agony.

After her there creeps silently, on bare feet, a creature in the semblance of a man.

He is tall, nearly six feet high, lean and emaciated. His scanty clothes are rags; his trousers are so tight that the sharp bones seem projecting through them. His arms are too long for the ragged sleeves of his tattered coat. He has no hat. His face is black with dirt, and wisps of a fortnight's beard are sticking in patches over it. His hair is long and matted. His eyes are sharp. It is the wolf of London—the wehr-wolf of civilization. In what lair does he crouch all day? Where does he hide while honest folk are up and doing.

She does not hear him as his naked feet press

close upon her. As he gets nearer he looks round quickly and furtively, like a beast of prey, before he makes his spring. No policeman is in sight. His long fingers clutch her shoulder, and she feels his quick breath upon her cheek. She starts, and turns with a shriek of terror.

"Have you got any money?" he hisses. "Give it to me—give it to me quick, or I will murder you."

She stared for a moment, and then, understanding so much, put her hand in her pocket, and drew out her purse. He looked up and down the street, and then snatching it from her hand, swiftly fled down a court and was lost.

Then the great, bare street fills her with terror, and she turns out of it. Perhaps there are no wolves in the small streets.

So, presently, she finds herself in Covent-garden Market. Light, activity, noise. The early market carts are arriving. She goes under the piazza, and sitting on a basket, falls fast asleep in the midst of it all.

She sleeps for nearly two hours. Then she is awakened by a rough but not unkindly touch of her arm.

"Come, young woman, I want my basket."

She sprang to her feet, trying to remember where she was. Two or three people were

staring at her. A great, red-faced woman among the rest—a coarse, rough, rude, hard-drinking creature.

They were speaking to her, but she could not understand. It seemed a dream.

"Leave her to me," said the woman. "You go about your business, all of you. I know a lady when I see her. You leave her, all of you, to me. Come, my dear, don't try to say a word. Don't 'ee speak now, or else ye'll begin to cry. Wait a bit—wait a bit."

She put her arms round Lollie's waist, and half led, half carried her, to a coffee-stall, of which, indeed, she was the proprietor.

"Now, me darlin', sit ye down on my seat, and taste this."

Laura had eaten nothing since breakfast the preceding day, say eighteen hours. The coffee restored her to a sense of reality, for she had fallen into a state almost of coma. She drank the cup, and handed it back to her new friend.

"Now, my dear, another—and a bit of bread and butter. Don't 'ee say a word, now, or ye'll begin to cry."

She took a little bread and butter, and then, overcome with weariness, her head fell upon the tray where the bread and butter stood, and she was asleep again.

The good soul covered her with a shawl—not the cleanest in the world, but the only one she had—and went on with her early coffee trade. At seven, she awakened her.

"I must go now, my dear," she said. "I'm an hour almost behind my time, and the childer want me; but I wouldn't waken you. Are you better now?"

Lollie felt in her pocket for her purse.

"I remember," she said, "a man robbed me last night of all I had. It was nineteen shillings. Stay," she added, taking off her locket—Venn's present—"take this for your kindness."

"I won't," said the woman, stoutly.

"You must. Please take it. I think I should have died if it hadn't been for you. You are a good woman."

"Don't 'ee, now, miss," she answered, taking the locket—"don't 'ee, now, miss, or you'll cry."

And then she began to cry herself; and Lollie left her, and slipped away.

On the Embankment, while the day slowly breaks, and as the light returns, the poor child begins to realize the desolateness of her position. She leans upon the low wall, and tries to think what she shall do. Only one thing occurs to her. She must go back to Gray's Inn, and find

out where Mr. Venn is. She has no money to buy breakfast, she has nowhere even to sit down; and her limbs are trembling with fatigue. She was almost staggering now as she reached the gate of the inn. From the other side of the road, she saw the porter and the people who knew her face standing in the gateway. So she went round by the side entrance in Warwick-court to the door. This time, at least, she would find him in his chambers. Alas! no. The door was still shut, as the gate of Paradise was to the Peri; and her courage died away within her. Inside lay Hartley, sound asleep; for it was but nine o'clock. Then she slowly and sadly descended the staircase. Should she go and ask the porter where he was? Not yet—presently. She would wait a little, and make one more trial. And so, down Holborn and into Long-acre, with a dazed idea of finding her way to Covent-garden, where there might be another basket to sit upon.

But as she crawled along, her cheeks blanched, her eyes heavy and dull, neither seeing nor feeling anything, some one passed her, started, ran back, and caught her by the arm, crying—

"Miss Lollie, Miss Lollie!" And she fell fainting forwards.

It was no other than that Mary of whom

mention has already been made. Mary the sinful, you know. She was on her way to rehearsal at Drury Lane. For there was the grandest of all grand spectacles "on," and she was one of the most prominent of the ladies engaged specially—a dignified position nearest to the lights—in the joyous dance of village maidens. She also had to appear as one of the Queen's personal attendants, in a procession which beat into fits any procession ever made on the stage or off it. She was going along with a friend, engaged in the same line, talking of her boy—

"And the notice he takes—it's wonderful. Only two years old, and he understands everything you tell him. And the words he can say; and good as gold with it all. I'm making him a little pair of— Oh, good gracious, it's Lollie Collingwood!"

She lived close by, in the pleasant seclusion of a two-pair back, King-street, Long-acre.

The two lifted Laura between them, and half carried her, half led her to the door, and dragged her upstairs, because now she gave way altogether, and lay lifeless in their arms. They placed her on the bed, and waited to see if she would recover. Presently she opened her eyes, gave a dreamy look at them as they leaned over the bed, and closed them again.

"Who is it?" whispered the friend.

"Hush! Don't make any noise. It's Mr. Venn's little girl. Oh, dear! oh, dear! and she so pretty and good! See—she's got a wedding ring on. Go down and get the kettle, my dear; and go on to rehearsal without me. I shall be fined; but I know who will pay the fine. And bring Georgie up. Perhaps the sight of him will do her good—it always does me; and come back, my dear, when rehearsal's over—I shall want you."

She took off Lollie's hat and jacket, her boots and wet stockings, covering her poor cold feet with blankets; and then smoothed and tidied her hair, hanging dank and wet upon her cheek as if she had been drowned.

But Lollie made no movement, lying stupefied and senseless.

Presently came up the other woman, bearing tea in one hand, and little Georgie, making a tremendous crowing, in the other.

"Is she come to?" whispered the girl.

"No; but she will presently. Go you, or you'll be late, too; and don't forget to come back as soon as you can. Where's the sugar? Georgie, boy, you've got to be very quiet. Sit down, and play with the spoon, and mother will give you sugared bread and butter."

The child immediately sat down, and assumed the silence of a deer-stalker.

"Did you ever see such a boy?" his mother went on. "As good as gold. Now the milk; and ask Mrs. Smith to trust me another quarter-hundred of coals. I must have a fire for this poor thing. Tell her there's them as will see it paid."

She made up the fire, tidied the room, so that it looked at least clean and neat; and then, pouring out the tea, brought it to the bedside.

"Lollie, my dear," she whispered—"Lollie, my little darling, open your eyes. It's only me—it's only Mary, that you helped three years ago. Take some tea, dear; and lie down, and go to sleep, and I'll send for Mr. Venn."

At this name the girl opened her eyes, and half lifted her head, while she drank the tea. Then she lay back, looked round the room, pressed her hand to her head as if in pain, and shut her eyes again.

She lay like one dead, but for the light breathing to which her good Samaritan listened from time to time.

At two o'clock the friend came back, and Mary began to hunt about in drawers, in pockets, everywhere.

"I knew I'd got a piece left somewhere," she

said at last, triumphantly producing a piece of note-paper the size of a man's hand, the remnant of a quire, the only purchase of note-paper she ever had occasion to make. "I knew I'd got a piece left. But there's no ink. A pencil must do."

With some pains, for she was not one of those who write a letter every day, she indited a letter to Mr. Venn :—

"DEAR MR. VENN—Come here as soon as you can. If you are out, come when you get back. Never mind what time it is. If it's midnight you must come.

"MARY."

"Take that," she whispered, "to Gray's Inn. If he is out, drop it into his letter-box; if he is in, tell him not to be bringing the old grandmother round. Laura don't want to see her, I fancy, so much as him."

On the bed the patient lay sleeping through all that day; for Mr. Venn did not come. A sudden shock makes one stupid. So long as it cannot be understood, one can go to sleep over it. It is only when the dull, slow pain succeeds the stupefying blow that we begin really to suffer. Lollie's sleep was what Mr. MacIntyre might have called a compensation due to her.

And in her dreams she went back to her husband, and mixed up, with the little house at Notting-hill, her former happiness with Mr. Venn.

The hours sped, and the afternoon came on. Mary had her dinner, and put something on the hob for Lollie if she should wake. Then came tea-time; but she slept still, and the boy had to be put to bed. Then it was Mary discovered that Lollie was sleeping in clothes wet through and through.

She half raised her, pulled them off, and laid her back, with her own warm flannel dressing gown wrapped round her.

No Mr. Venn.

Then Mary sat down by the fire, prepared to watch and keep herself awake.

CHAPTER XVII.

BUT where was Venn?

He was engaged at a funeral; no other, indeed, than that of Mrs. Peck herself. The old lady was dead—not in consequence of her grand-daughter's elopement; because, when

she found that little difference would be made in the allowance, she was a good deal more comfortable without her than with her. She died of some disease more commonplace than a broken heart, one for which the doctor brought her little phials of physic and Hartley Venn pint bottles of port. As for the disappearance of the girl, that affected her chiefly in lowering the position she had hitherto held in the Row. The transportation of a son or the disappearance of a daughter is held in some circles to be as much a disease as the scarlet fever. It is a thing which happens, somehow, in many most respectable families, and is not to be accounted for or fought against.

The old woman grew worse instead of better, and presently kept her bed. Then Hartley got a nurse for her, and used to look in once a week or so to see how she was getting on. One day the inevitable message from across the River came to the dame in bed, and she immediately sent for Hartley, in great trouble lest she should have to begin the journey before he arrived. But he was in time.

"Is it about Lollie?" he asked, expecting some message of forgiveness or love to the girl.

"No—no," she answered. "Drat the girl, with her fine learning and her ways! It's myself this

time, Mr. Venn, and time enough too, I think. All the things I've seen you give that child, and never a thing for me."

Hartley almost burst into a fit of laughter, it was so grotesque.

Here she was seized with a fit of coughing that nearly finished her off altogether.

"Oh, dear, dear! The time's come, Mr. Venn, when you can make amends for your selfishness, and give *me* something too."

"My good soul, haven't I given you everything you want? Do you want more port wine?"

"Better than that," she gasped. "I want a Funeral. I haven't complained, have I, sir? Not when I see the child decked out that fine as the theayter couldn't equal it, I haven't murmured; because, says I to myself—oh, dear! oh, dear!—Mr. Venn, he's a good man, he is. He means it all for the best; and the time will come. And now it has come. I want a Funeral. If I was to die to-night," she went on, "you'd save all the 'lowances, and the port wine. Think of that, now."

"I don't see what you want. A funeral?"

"When Peck died we had a trifle saved and put by. That was fifteen years ago. And we did it properly. His brother came from Hornsey, and his two cousins from Camberwell, and

we all went respectable to Finchley. After the Funeral — it was a cold day — we went to the Crown, and sat round the fire and cried, as was but right, and drank gin and water hot. Oh, dear! — and we all enjoyed ourselves. Let *me* have a Funeral too, Mr. Venn."

He promised, and she died that very night, chuckling over the great happiness that had come to her. The two cousins from Camberwell, who had not been seen since the demise of the late Mr. Peck, could not be found, but the brother from Hornsey turned up; and Venn, anxious that the old man should really have a good time of it, went to the funeral himself, and gave him after it more gin and water than he could carry.

This pious act accomplished, he went to the club and dined, going afterwards to Lynn's, where he sat till twelve, discoursing of funeral ceremonies of all nations; so that it was after midnight when he got Mary's missive. He trembled when he read it. The blood rushed to his head, because it could mean but one thing—his little girl. And as he hurried down the streets to her lodging, he could find no formula for the prayer of his heart, which was for her safety and—for her purity.

Everybody had gone to bed; but Mary heard his step at the door, and let him in herself.

"What is it?" he whispered, as she proceeded quickly to bolt the door again and put up the chain—"what is it, girl?"

"Hush!" she answered. "Pull off your boots. I'll carry them. She's up there, and asleep."

He crept up. On the bed there lay, still sleeping, her face upon her hand, her cheek all pale and blanched, her long hair streaming back upon the pillow, wrapped warm in all Mary's blankets, his Lollie—his little girl. He made a movement towards her, but Mary held him back.

"Not yet—wait. She has been sleeping since one o'clock this morning. Let her be. Something dreadful has happened to her. Sit down and wait.

"Notice, Mr. Venn. She's got the same clothes on as she used to have. She must have been going back to you. Poor thing! poor thing! See here — her jacket, and hat, and blue frock, and all — I know them, every one. And look here."

Very softly she laid back the blanket which covered her left hand. On the third finger was a wedding ring.

Hartley bent down and kissed the ring. His tears fell fast upon the little fingers.

"When will she wake?" he whispered.

"I don't know—anything may wake her."

"I shall stay here," he replied; and sat down by the bed, in the only chair in the room.

Mary hesitated a moment, and then lay down on the extreme edge of the other side of the bed. Hartley noticed then that between her and Lollie lay the child.

In two moments she, too, was asleep; and the watch of the night began in earnest. Hartley saw how Mary had laid all her blankets and wraps upon his child, and left herself with nothing, not even a shawl. He took off his own great-coat—he was ever a kind-hearted man—and laid it over her shoulders, with a corner of blanket across her feet, and then sat down again, shivering—the fire was quite out, and the room was getting cold—and waited.

Presently the candle went out suddenly, and then there was darkness and silence, save for the breath of the sleepers.

The tumult of his thoughts in this stillness was almost more than his nerves could bear. It was not till the girl left him that he had at all realized the hold she had upon his affections and her place in his life. He had been very lonely without her. He had longed with all his soul to see her again. There was no moment, now,

when he was not ready to forgive everything, nor when his arms were not open to her. The love he had for the girl was the outcome of so many years. She had so twisted and twined the tendrils of affection round him, that when she went away he was like some old tower from which its ivy, the growth of centuries, had been rudely and roughly dragged away. With the child coming every day, full of fresh thoughts, and eager for knowledge, there was always some compensation for the neglect of the world. Laura was his family: she it was who preserved his life from utter loneliness and disappointment. While he watched the growth of her mind, he forgot that his own was, as he was fond of calling it, a Wreck. While he listened to her ideas, he forgot that his own were ruthlessly consigned to waste-paper baskets; and with her bright face and child-like ways, he had forgotten that he was getting on for forty—a poor man still, and disappointed.

All these things crowded into his mind as he sat there, and a great hunger seized his heart to have all things back again as they were before. He had been growing weary of late; the old things ceased to please him; there was little interest left in life; he felt himself getting old; he awoke in the morning without the former feel-

ing that another day would bring its little basket of pleasure; he lay down at night with the new feeling that here was finished another of those gray-coloured days which go to make up the total of a sad life. Would that all could be as it had been—that the step of the child could be heard again upon the stairs, and the lessons renewed where they left off. But the waters run not back to the mountains. Old Mrs. Peck was lying buried in Finchley Cemetery. Laura was a woman; a wedding ring was on her finger; her long eyelashes lay wet with tears upon her cheeks—those cheeks that never knew a tear while he was there to kiss them. She moaned in her dreams who had once only smiled; and nothing could come back but the old, old, inextinguishable love.

So, minute by minute, the slow night passed along. Hartley sat through it motionless, in the dark, catching the breathing of the sleeper, though he could not see her face. After many hours, there came through the window the first faint streaks of a November dawn, growing stronger and stronger. When it fell on little Georgie's face, it half roused him from his sleep, and reaching out his arms to find his mother, the boy laid his little hand on Lollie's neck, and she awoke. Woke with a start, and a rush of

thoughts that made her half sit up and stare at the figure of Hartley, indistinct in the morning gloom, with strange, wild eyes.

"Where am I?—where am I?" she murmured, sinking back.

Hartley bent over and raised her head, kissing her brow in his quiet, old-fashioned way.

"Open your eyes, my little girl. You are come home again. Thank God, you are come home again," the tears raining thick upon her face.

She hardly as yet comprehended; but at last, sitting up in bed, she looked about the room, trying to remember. The bitter knowledge came at last; and, throwing her arms about his neck, she laid her face against his, crying pitifully—

"Oh, Mr. Venn—Mr. Venn!"

This was all her prayer. Hartley could not trust himself to answer. He clasped her in his arms, he held her face to his, and covered it with kisses, he called her a thousand names of love and endearment—his child, his Lollie, his little daughter. And then Mary showed herself to be a young woman of really a high order of feeling; for, awakened by the voices, she got up from the edge of the bed on which she had slept all night, and catching up the still sleeping boy,

disappeared to some other part of the house—I fancy to the back kitchen below—and left them alone.

Presently, as the light grew stronger, Lollie recovered herself a little, and in a quick, nervous way began to tell him her tale. Hartley listened with grinding teeth. She told all—extenuating nothing, hiding nothing, save some of the cruelty of her husband's last words. He stopped her then.

"You wrote to me from the place where you were married, my dear?"

"Yes. Mr. MacIntyre was to take the letter."

"And again from Vieuxcamp?"

"I wrote twice from Vieuxcamp."

"I got no letters at all, poor child—not one. They suppressed them all. Go on. It was the day before yesterday. Where did you go when you left him?"

"I walked—I don't know. I walked all night. You were not in your chambers. It rained. I walked about all night. Somebody took away my purse. What was I to do, Mr. Venn? Where was I to go? A woman in Covent-garden gave me some coffee—"

"Tell me her name, Lollie — tell me her name."

"I don't know. She had a stall at the corner of Bow-street."

"She had a stall at the corner of Bow-street," he repeated.

"And she went home at seven o'clock."

"Home at seven?" he said. "All night, Lollie?—all the cold, wet, dark night? Oh, child, child!—why did you not come to my rooms, and sit on the stairs till I came home?"

He held her close to his heart.

"All night—all night! Lollie, Lollie, my heart is breaking for you. One thing you have forgotten. Tell me the name of your husband."

"Philip Durnford."

"Arthur's cousin!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

PHILIP DURNFORD—Arthur's cousin, of whom he was always speaking. It seemed a new complication. Venn sat back in his chair, pondering.

"Promise me something, Mr. Venn," Lollie whispered—"promise me something. Do not harm Philip."

"Harm him!" he answered, with a fierce light in his eyes.

"For my sake, do not try to see him. Do not go in his way."

"My poor child."

"But promise."

"Lollie, you ask too much. But what harm can I do him? I cannot go round to his tent with a knife, as a child of Israel would have done, and stab him till he die. I wish I could.

I cannot even ask him to fight a duel. I would if I could. My aim should be steady and my eye straight. Tell me what harm I can possibly do to him. True, I could go to him with a stick, and so relieve myself."

"No, Mr. Venn, you will not do that."

"Do not talk about him, child—do not talk about him. Let us talk of other things. And, first, to make you well. My child, how hot your head is. I will go and send a doctor to you. Lie down and sleep again."

"I should like some tea," she said, sinking back exhausted. "I am thirsty. My hands are burning, and my head swims. Send me Mary, please."

He hurried downstairs, and brought up Mary; and then, promising to return in the afternoon, went away to send her a doctor. That done, he returned to his chambers, feeling lighter and happier than he had done for months past. So happy was he, that he set to work and burned no less than three immortal essays, because he suspected that they were deficient in joy and thankfulness—two qualities which he now regarded as essential to a well-balanced mind. That sacrifice completed, he sat down before the fire and fell fast asleep, thinking of how the good old days were to be restored to him.

When he awoke it was three o'clock, and he had had no breakfast. That was a trifling consideration, because coffee can be always made. He broke bread with a sense of happiness and gratitude that almost made his modest meal a sacrament, and then went back to his patient.

But on the stairs he was met by Mary.

"You can't come in, Mr. Venn. Lollie is very ill, and the doctor is with her. Don't be frightened. She's had too great a shock. You may come to-morrow."

He turned away, all his joy dashed. As he shut the door behind him, he ground his teeth savagely, and stood still for a moment.

"If my child"—shaking his hand at the silent heavens—"if my little girl does not get better, I will kill him—I will kill him! A life for a life. I will kill him!"

Then he wandered about the streets, following as nearly as he could the wanderings of Lollie during that night, and trying to imagine where she would stand for shelter. The fancy seized him to find out the man who robbed her. It was from a court on the north side of Oxford-street. He went along, turning into every court he could find, and prowling up and down with a vague sort of feeling that he might see the man, and know him by his long legs, his bare feet,

and his crouching like a wolf. There were a good many wolf-like creatures about, but none that quite answered to Lollie's description; and he desisted from the search at last, calling himself a fool, and so went home.

Then another notion seized him. He ordered the night porter to call him at four o'clock, and so went to bed.

At four he was awakened, and got up.

"Most extraordinary," he murmured, shivering, and lighting a candle, "the sensation of rising, in the night. I quite understand now why the labouring classes, who always do it, never take tubs."

He dressed hastily, and went out into the court. The very last light had disappeared in the square. The last roysterer was gone to bed. The last student had knocked off work for the night.

"It gives one," he said to himself, "an Antipodean feeling. I feel as if I were on my head. Now I begin to understand why agricultural labourers are never boisterous in their spirits. This is enough to sadden Momus!"

Not a soul was in Holborn when he passed through the gate. He buttoned his great coat tighter across his chest, and strode up the street, his footsteps echoing as he went.

"I wish it would rain," he said, "then I should understand the misery of it better."

He left Holborn, and, passing down the bye-streets, made directly for Covent-garden. There he found the market in full vigour—the carts all seeming to come in at the same time. He peered about in the faces of the drivers and workmen.

"An expression of hope," he said, "or rather of expectation. We have had our bed—they seem as if they were always looking for it. Very odd! Life pulled forward—breakfast at four, dinner at ten, tea at two. Bed, if you are a Sybarite, about seven; if you are a reveller, at nine. Where is my coffee-woman?"

He came to a stall, where a fat, red-faced woman was ladling out cups of coffee to an expectant crowd. He stood on one side, and let the crowd thin, and then humbly advanced.

"A cup of coffee, if you please, ma'am."

She poured it out for him.

"Drink it, and go home to bed," she said. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, stayin' out all night this fashion."

"I am only just out of bed," said Venn, meekly. "I got out of bed to see you."

"And pray what might you be wanting to

see me for, young man? I don't owe you nothing."

"On the contrary, it is I who owe you a great deal," he replied, sitting on the shafts of her coffee cart. "Tell me, my good soul, you were here the night before last?"

"I am here every night."

"Then you remember the young lady who came here."

"I should think I do remember her — the pretty lamb."

Venn took her great rough hand in his, and held it.

"She gave you a locket. Have you got it with you?"

"Yes, it's in my pocket. Wait a bit—wait a bit. Here it is. What do you want with the locket?"

"She has sent me to buy the locket back," he replied, "and to find out where you live. She is with her friends now. You must not ask anything about her—why she was out alone; but she is with her own friends—those who love her. She is ill too—God help her!"

"Amen," said the woman, "and good she was, I swear."

"As good as any saint. See, give me the locket, and tell me where you live. She shall

come soon to see you herself. And here is the price of the locket."

He laid five pounds in her hand. The woman looked at the gold—it was as much as ever she had had in her possession, all at once—and then held out her hand again.

"If she's poor, take it back, I don't want it—the Lord love her! If she's rich, I'll keep it for the childer."

"I am rich," said Venn, "because I have her back. Keep the money. And now, tell me where you live."

She shook her head again, and turned away.

"I can't go to bed," he said. "I've had my breakfast, too; what time shall I want lunch, I wonder? Where am I to go now?"

It was not quite six o'clock. He strolled along the streets, making mental observations, watching how the traffic began and how it slowly increased. Then he went on the Embankment.

"I have never yet seen the rosy-fingered dawn. Let us contemplate one of nature's grandest phenomena."

A dense fog came rolling up with the break of day, and there was nothing to see at all.

"I am disappointed," he said to himself. "From the description of that lying tribe, the

poets, I had expected a very different thing. Alas! one by one the illusions of life die away. Let us go and look after our patient."

The worst was passed; and though Laura was hanging between life and death, the balance of youth and strength was in her favour.

After a day or two, they allowed Venn to enter the sick room and help to nurse. Never had patient a nurse more careful and attentive. In the morning, when Mary went to rehearsal, and in the evening, when she went to the theatre, he took her place, and watched the spark of life slowly growing again into a flame. She was light-headed still, and in her unconscious prattling revealed all the innocent secrets of her life. What revelations those are of sick men in the ears of mothers and sisters who have thought them spotless!

Venn learned all. He heard her plead with her husband for permission to tell himself, to write, to try and see him. He saw how, through it all, he himself lay at her heart; and lastly, he heard from her lips the real and true story of the last cruel blow that drove her out into the street. What could he do to this man? How madden him with remorse? How drive him and lash him with a scourge of scorpions?

One morning he found her sitting up, half-dressed, weak and feeble, but restored to her right mind. Then Hartley Venn did a thing he had not done for nearly thirty years—you so easily get out of the habit at Eton—he knelt down by the bedside, her hand in his, and thanked God aloud for his great mercy.

"When I get well again, Mr. Venn," whispered Lollie, "we will go to church together, will we not."

Then he sat down by her while she told him all the story again, till the tears ran down both their cheeks; for Hartley Venn was but a great, soft-hearted baby, and showed his feelings in a manner quite unknown to the higher circles.

"But what are we to do with you, Lollie?" he asked, when he had told all his news—how Mrs. Peck was gone, and there was no house anywhere for her. "You could not possibly have gone to live with your old grandmother any more. What shall we do for you?"

"I don't know, Mr. Venn. Do something for Mary. See how good she has been."

"Mary don't want anything, child. When she does she knows where to go for help."

Then he told her all about the coffee woman.

"I will take you to see her," he said, "as soon as you are well. Here is your locket, my dear,

back again. We are to go in the day-time, and I am to prepare her for your visit first. But what am I do with you? Stay. I will go and ask Sukey? She always knows what ought to be done."

It was really a serious question. What was he to do with her? He might get her lodgings. But then his own visits would have to be few, so as to prevent talk. He might take a house for her, though that hardly seemed the best thing. But as he walked along to Woburn-place, a brilliant thought flashed across him. Sukey should take her. A comfortable house, the care of a lady, surrounding circumstances not only new, but new enough to have a charm, and a life beyond the reach of any malicious tongues. Nothing could be better. But, then, Sukey might object. He smoothed his face into its sweetest lines. He would diplomatize.

Sukey was in a state of great nervous excitement, in consequence of having been excommunicated. She was of High Church proclivities, and loved, in moderation, the exercise of those observances appointed by her advisers. Naturally, too, she was fond of the society of her clergyman, a gentleman who held rigid views as to fasting and feasting, observing the periods of the former courageously—but with grief and

pain—and the latter with undisguised joy. Both states of feeling he regarded as conducive to a sound spiritual state. And so far he was followed by Miss Venn, who hated a vegetable diet as much as she loved a good dinner. In an evil hour, having been presented with an Angola cat, she christened it St. Cyril. Her director, on discovering this piece of levity, treated it as an offence quite beyond the venial sins common among mankind, and not only ordered her to change the name to Tom, but also enjoined as a penance an octave of cabbage. At this tyranny, her whole soul revolted, and she flew into open rebellion: going over to the enemy's camp, a neighbouring Low Church establishment, where as yet no surplice was flaunted in the pulpit, the Psalms were read, and the service finely rendered.

Thereupon she was excommunicated.

END OF VOL. II.